

UNDEFEATED
MUT
BATHING
IRONIC
ORIONIC

最強無敵の 機龍

6

明月千里
SENRI AKATSUKI

III 春日歩
AKSUGA

Novel Illustrations



最弱無敗の
神装機龍

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セリスティア・
ラルゲリス



フィルフィ・
アイングラム



Character



ルクス・アーカディア

滅亡したアーカディア帝国の王子。
『無敗の最弱』と呼ばれる機竜使い。



リーズシャルテ・アティスマータ

アティスマータ新王国の王女。朱^{あか}の戦姫^{せんき}と呼ばれる。
神装機竜《ティアマト》の使い手。



フィルフィ・アイングラム

アイングラム財閥の次女。ルクスの幼馴染みで学園長の妹。
神装機竜《デュポーン》の使い手。



クルルシファー・エインフォルク

北の大国、ユミル教国からの留学生であるクラスメイト。
神装機竜《ファフニール》の使い手。



アイリ・アーカディア

旧帝国の皇族の生き残り。
一年生で、ルクスの実の妹。



セリスティア・ラルグリス

^{シヴァレス}『騎士団』の団長である三年生。学園最強と言われている。
四大貴族の公爵家令嬢で、男嫌いとして有名。



フギル・アーカディア

旧アーカディア帝国第一皇子。
現在は行方不明。ルクスが追っている相手。



レリィ・アイングラム

^{アカデミー}王立士官学園の学園長。フィルフィの姉。

World

装甲機竜《ドラグライド》

遺跡から発掘された、古代兵器。

その中でも希少種であり、高い性能を持つものは、神装甲機竜と呼ばれる。

また、装甲機竜の使い手は、機竜使い《ドラグナイト》と呼ばれる。

遺跡《ルイン》

世界に七つ発見された古代遺跡。装甲機竜《ドラグライド》が発掘されたため、国力を左右する重要な存在として、各国間で縄張り争いが起きている。

幻神獣《アビス》

遺跡から現れる謎の幻獣。人類の脅威であり、機竜使いのみが対抗できる。

終焉神獣《ラグナレク》

ひとつの遺跡^{ルイン}に対し一匹のみ存在するという、超常の力を秘めた七匹の幻神獣。

『黒き英雄』

正体不明の装甲機竜《ドラグライド》を使い、たった1機で帝国の装甲機竜の約1200機を倒したと言われる伝説の英雄。

アティスマータ新王国

リーズシャルテの父であるアティスマータ伯が、アーカディア帝国に対して行ったクーデターによって、五年前に建国された国。

アーカディア旧帝国

世界の五分之一を束ねていた大国。世界最強と謳^{うた}われた、圧倒的な軍事力を背景に圧政を敷いていたが、クーデターによって滅ぼされた。

ルクスとアイリは、この帝国の皇族の生き残り。

七竜騎聖

年々高まる幻神獣の脅威に対抗し、世界協定に加盟した各国から選出された、代表の機竜使いたち。





Prologue – Memory with my older brother

I, Airi Arcadia, had always found this unbelievable since childhood.

It was something that happened when I was still a frail little girl.

Nii-sama, Lux Arcadia, had the rights to inherit the throne. But then, he was neglected by the rest of our family because he was only the 7th prince, the youngest one.

I suppose, even members from the other imperial families look down on Nii-sama for this fact.

All that had happened while the Empire was still a patriarchy.

Back then when I was young, I could tell that the environment we grew up in was a harsh one.

However, Nii-sama's concern was directed at something else.

"You're feeling alright? Is there anything I can get you?"

Those were the questions that he always asked the bedridden me.

That was shortly after mother died in the carriage accident.

The shock from the event had worsened my sickness.

It was a sad time for the young me.

"Call for me if anything happens. When you are feeling better, let's go play in the park!"

His gentle smile always put my mind at ease, but because I was still feeling tortured by the many emotions that came after mother's death—— "Nii-sama, please leave me alone..."

Why did I say that? I still regret it to this day.

"In two months, I'll be going to the count at the border... Even if you keep

spending your time on me, Nii-sama won't achieve anything."

The sadness from being forced to leave the family due to father's orders.

The sickness that was slowly eroding my body.

In this helpless reality, I could only feel desperation and sadness.

Under these circumstances, I made that remark.

I thought, that even Nii-sama would get angry when hearing that.

[I really can't stand talking to you, especially since that's how you feel about me.] Was what I expected to hear.

I also expected him to shout at the hopeless me who had refused his treatment.

However, Nii-sama just smiled awkwardly.

"Sorry, Airi, I made you worry."

He then softly stroked my hair.

"But, don't worry. I will find a way."

".....!— I'm sorry, Nii-sama. I-I'm s-sorry... "

Tears came flowing out of my eyes.

He lifted the sobbing me close, and hugged tightly.

"So, don't worry. You don't need to cry anymore."

His gentle voice penetrated my mind, freeing me from my worries.

In my cold, dark world, this was the only thing that brought peace to my mind.

(...but, why?)

I wondered since long ago.

When I was still in the palace, mother and me were but "women" living with Nii-sama.

Even if he had no rights or power, as long as Nii-sama complied with the patriarchy and treated mother and I roughly, then Nii-sama wouldn't be looked

down upon by the rest of the royal family.....

Indeed, Nii-sama was different from the others.

How was he different? I honestly couldn't describe it in words.

Why didn't Nii-sama abandon me?

Since childhood, I have never been able to ask that, and I—

“—Airi, are you feeling alright?”

“...It's nothing... I always feel alright.”

I answered Nii-sama coldly.

“Okay, but if there's anything, please tell me immediately.”

Nii-sama smiled gently, and his footsteps slowly faded into the distance.

Recently, I thought I had been making Nii-sama worry about me again.

Whenever we met I always avoided eye contact and refused to talk.

The reason for this, was in the pages of the ancient texts I'm holding.

Its contents differed greatly from our current knowledge.

It was recorded there that the existences that were called the Lord(Creator) of the Ruin, they were called with the name Arcadia, the same name as us, the imperial family of the Old Empire.

The first imperial princess Listelka Rei Arshalia
The second imperial princess
Aeril Vi Arcadia

The third imperial princess Hayes Vi Arcadia

.....There were no traces of these names.

I had flipped through a lot of the Old Empire's family genealogy and history books, but their names didn't exist.

A few decades ago, we confirmed the existence of the Ruins for the first time. We also learned about the prosperity of the Arcadia Empire since centuries ago.

So there was a possibility that a Lord did exist. There was a girl named Hayes who was trying to destroy us from the darkness.

This situation had left me confused and uneasy.

“Who are we, Nii-sama.....”

That question, which I had whispered many times, wasn't heard by anyone's ears and disappeared into the void.

Episode 1 – Blue Tyrant

Part 1

Currently, the color of skin filled his sight.

This was a room in one of the largest buildings of the academy.

Other than Drag-Ride training, most of the other physical training, like kenjutsu and taijutsu, took place here, hence the floor was padded with a high friction material.

The second floor of this building would be used as a venue for meetings from time to time.

Standing behind the wooden railings on the second floor, he could see all the girls in their underwear.

(Wh-what's going on-!? This is bad!?)

As the footsteps got louder, Lux hid deeper into the building.

(Am I stupid, what's the point of hiding? All I'm doing is cornering myself like this!) Luckily, there wasn't anyone on the second floor originally, so all he had to do was to continue hiding and not be discovered.

Lux hid in the shadows. After waiting for the girls he was trying to avoid walked past, he darted behind the armrest of a chair.

(Calm down, though I'm not completely sure how it ended up like this, but I will be killed if anyone finds me!) While trying to recall his original purpose in this place, Lux's eyes drifted further into the Shangri-La that was before his eyes.

Under the sunlight that came in from a window, the glossy nudes of the girls were as clear as day.

Their skin shone in a healthy tone, they were even putting on some really alluring underwear.

The blush of their cheeks, their defenseless skin and smiles of pure innocence.

“Did your chest get bigger again? That’s so unfair~”

“Of course not, it’s just that that pair she’s wearing is cuter and makes them stand out more.”

“Sen-senpai! Don’t be so loud! After all, this place-”

The room was filled with the soft breathing and sweet scent of the girls, all of which were extremely stimulating to Lux.

Feeling something was amiss, Lux decided to look for his target again, as his eyes landed on the half naked girls, his heart rate started to go up again.

(W-why am I doing something like this that makes me look like a peeping pervert?) But Lux had no choice.

Before his secrets could be found out, Lux couldn’t shift his gaze.

Lux trembled as he recalled what happened a few minutes ago.

Part 2

“Alright, as planned, we will be making the final adjustments for the promotion tests. There will also be mock exams for both the technical and written parts of the assessments. Are you all ready?”

“Yes.....!”

As Raigree sensei’s stern voice resounded throughout the classroom, the students, including Lux, replied in unison.

That morning, the class was filled with tension and uneasiness—even a bit of anticipation.

The All-Dragon Battle in the capital had ended two weeks ago, and Autumn had arrived.

Lux and his party returned to the city of Cross Field. Shortly after returning to the tranquility of campus life, a new event had arrived to disturb their peace.

That was the Drag-Knight’s Class promotion exam which took place every Spring and Autumn.

There were a total of 5 levels of “Classes” for a Drag-Knight, based on one’s proficiency at piloting a Drag-Ride.

There was the “Beginner Class”, which was only allowed to observe and take part in training sessions.

Then there was the “Low Class”, who could take part in combating the Abyss when permission was given.

Above that was the “Middle Class”, which made up the numbers of the main fighting force, the “High Class”, that could command these forces, with the special Class at the apex, “EX”.

Of course, “Class” did not dictate everything. Especially so to those girls who

saw piloting a Drag-Ride as their lifelong dream, this test was but a gauge of their personal strength.

“As said by the principal a week ago, this year’s exams will be held in Wanheim. We, as the representatives of the New Kingdom must show our strength and not tarnish the name of our nation.”

Moreover, this year’s situation was somewhat different.

Usually these Class promotion exams were held in the royal capital, but this year about half of the exams were taking place abroad.

The joint test had the objective of strengthening the alliance from the cultural exchange and unifying the standard of the evaluation related to Drag-Rides.

So, the examinations would be in Wanheim, and students from the New Kingdom would be going over to take it.

“Your exams begin in 7 days, keep that in mind. Do your best and leave no regrets!”

“Yes!”

The students once again replied in unison, Raigree-sensei quietly nodded her head.

“Your written exam begins in 10 minutes, I expect you all to pay attention!”

As she left the classroom, the classroom lightened up again

“Uwaa~ we are having a written test next?...Ah...That’s too boring.”

As the neighboring Tillfur complained loudly, Lux smiled.

As planned, the mock writing exam began.

Because Lux enrolled halfway through the year, even the basic questions were giving him a headache, but due to his studying sessions with Krulcifer in the library, he could barely cope with the questions.

As the written exam ended, the technical exam was going to begin.

The first part of the technical exam was a long-distance run.

Then there were tasks that gauged the candidate’s strength, balance, *etc.*

Following that were basic kenjutsu and taijutsu. Lastly was the Drag-Ride proficiency exam, where real blades and rounds were used.

The Drag-Ride exam consisted of the summoning and equipping, flight and weapon usage combined with various forms of other tests that would only get harder.

Lux was able to handle all of these with ease, a few minutes later the bell sounded.

“—Well that concludes the mock exam. Lux Arcadia. After this you are to proceed alone. After changing into your uniform, you are to wait in the classroom. If you feel tired, or experience pain, then proceed back to the dormitory to rest, if you are really bored, then go study at the library. I won't force you to stay indoors but you are not allowed to get close to any other building until you get permission to.

“Uh. Okay, I got it.”

Raigree sensei's instructions left Lux slightly puzzled. Just as he was ready to leave the training field— Lux felt a pat on his back,

“Yo, my knight, how was the mock exam?”

He turned around.

The girl in the pilot suit bared an innocent smile.

Lizsharte Atismata.

The princess of the New Kingdom, the girl who appointed Lux as her personal knight.

That ponytail tied with a ribbon on the side of her blonde head, her red eyes filled with strength, her small body exuding an infinite confidence and enthusiasm. Lizsharte Atismata was such a girl.

She was the one who recognized the abilities of Lux, an orphan, as well as a criminal of the Old Empire, and the one who suggested forcing him to enroll. Now that the two had gotten close, Lux was truly grateful to her.

“There was no problem, thanks to Lisha-sama's tuning, the machine was able to function really smoothly.”

The “Wyvern” that Lux piloted was fine-tuned by Lisha.

With the specialized defense tuning as its base, she added to it the weapon she developed herself: the Scale Blade. Even Lux, who had seen a lot of customized Drag-Rides in his lifetime, thought that Lisha’s talent for this was one of a kind.

“Of-of course it was thanks to me! You are going to use that in your exams at Wanheim after all. Also, I’m quite happy myself, since my knight is getting stronger!”

Lisha nodded enthusiastically as she hugged Lux’s arm. From this angle, her petite body only served to emphasize her bountiful chest that was rubbing against his arm. Lux’s heart went doki-doki, at that moment— “You are thinking too much, it’s not like he is getting stronger because of you.”

Wearing the same outfit as Lisha, Krulcifer appeared from the side.

Straight blue hair that reached till her waist, a body that wasn’t just graceful but also well-proportioned.

This girl’s beauty was almost fairy-like, she gave off an unique aura. She shrugged her hair elegantly as she approached.

“Ah, Krulcifer-san, good work there. Tha-thanks to your guidance I was able to successfully complete the written exam.”

“Ara, that’s good news, looks like my nightly visits weren’t wasted.”

“Wha.....!?”

Upon hearing Krulcifer’s really vague description, Lisha blushed and started to panic.

“Wha-What is this? Lux! Even though you already have me, why do you still mingle with this woman?”

“No, no—She is just helping me with my studies!”

Lux tried to clear up the misunderstanding, but Lisha just glared at Krulcifer suspiciously.

“It’s me who asked Lux to keep this a secret, and if word gets out that I was

giving Lux extra lessons after classes, there would surely be bizarre misunderstandings.”

“Guh.....It’s still really suspicious.....Well, since the written exam is over, let’s just forget about it.”

“Well, of course. Well, I believe we have our separate things to do after this, so I’ll take my leave first. It’s a pity that I’m going to work separately from Lux.”

As Krulcifer smiled and left, Lisha nodded to herself.

(Huh.....So what’s everyone going to do now?)

As Lux wondered to himself, Lisha turned around and said to him.

“...Right, that thing you left with me. It’s on the workbench in my workshop “Atelier”. Can you get it by yourself?”

“Yes, I got it.”

That thing referred to “Bahamut”. The sword that was kept in a black scabbard, a “Sword Device”.

Since the mock exams only required the “Wyvern”, Lux left it with her since it’s troublesome to carry around.

So far, their everyday life was peaceful.

After Lisha left, Lux went to the workshop(Atelier) to recover the sword device of Bahamut.

“Even so, last time was very dangerous...”

Although it was quite an imminent situation, the symbol of the “Black Hero”, who once destroyed the former Empire, the Divine Drag-Ride Bahamut was used in the imperial city.

Fortunately, because of the huge chaos caused by the “Giant Soldier(Gigas)” that was raging at the venue of the All-Dragon Tournament, coupled with Queen Raffi and the relevant personnel’s help, the people didn’t notice Lux’s true face.

However, it couldn’t suppress the people’s curiosity.

Who was that Drag-Knight that saved the New Kingdom from the crisis, by

chance, could it be the “Black Hero” from five years ago?

Such a rumor was whispered throughout the kingdom. It was a painful headache for Lux.

At the academy, the identity of the Black Hero was supposed to be unknown to anyone other than the “Knights Squadron (Syvalles)” as usual, but if there was a student at the All-Dragon Battle auditorium, and she saw him wearing Bahamut, then even if there was a distance between them, she would be able to recognize him.

“It seems that until the situation has calmed down, I need to be careful—”

Lux said so alone, trying to pick up Bahamut’s Sword Device.

Now that the outside of the scabbard was wrapped in pieces of white cloth, it looked very simple.

“There should be no problem.....right?”

When he went outside the workshop (Atelier) and confirmed it, the appearance of the dorm mother calling towards him from a place that was a little away came into Lux’s view.

“Hey, errand boy, I have something I want to ask you for a moment.”

“—Ah, yes. I’m coming.”

Because the sword scabbard he just picked up became an obstacle, he left it on the side of the curb, and went to listen to the story.

The talk was about the previous chores, mainly about the storeroom of the dormitory. Although it only lasted for a few minutes— “A-eh.....?”

When Lux got back to the location, the sword that should be placed on the curb suddenly disappeared.

Lux confusedly looked around and saw someone looking like a first year girl running not far away from him.

“Wait for me! I just found my Sword Device!”

He saw the girl chasing another student in a panic.

And her hands were holding the scabbard—

“——Don't tell me!?”

Lux reflectively looked along the vicinity.

In a position at a slight distance away, a Sword Device that was also covered in a white sheath stood against the curb.

Lux immediately picked it up to check...but from a glance he knew that this sword was slightly different from his.

The biggest difference was that, the outside of the sword scabbard was trimmed with the name “Clariss” embroidered in red.

“Not good!? That girl, she mistook my sword——!”

Perhaps taking advantage of the examination interval to rest here, the result was that she had forgotten and left behind her Sword Device here, then she noticed and came to get it in a hurry.

Then, she accidentally mistook Lux's nearby Sword Device as hers, and took it directly.

“Wait, wait a bit!? That's mine——!”

This is bad.

Absolutely bad.

Even currently at school, the rumor of “The mysterious Black Drag-Knight in the kingdom capital” was buzzing, therefore the black Sword Device mustn't be exposed to light.

Thinking about it, Lux was losing his calm.

Why, after receiving various simulation tests together, only Lux was forced to act separately.

While not completely reaching the idea in there, he chased after the little girl with full force.

Although the girls had run farther, but he was still able to catch up.

However, as soon as he was about to catch her figure, the back of the girl disappeared inside the indoor practice grounds——a wooden building that was as large as a large inn.

“A.....!?”

When Lux was just about to continue to chase her, he was stopped by the two girls at the door.

“.....A, Lux-senpai is off-limit? Because in here, there is special training.”

“Yeah , but as much as I personally want you to see——A, as expected, it’s no good. I’m very sorry.”

Both girls were standing up with their hands spread out blocking his view while they blushed.

Although both of them looked like they were joking, but they didn’t seem willing to let Lux through.

“That, a little girl who went in awhile ago forgot something ——”

“A, that’s alright. Because we will make sure to give it to her later. What did she forget?”

Although the gatekeeper girls said so, but they seemed to be unable to move for awhile, in the meantime, it would be too late if they pulled out the Sword Device.

Lux observed the indoor training ground and then made a decision immediately.

“Oh, I’m sorry. It was my mistake. Well then!”

Lux bid the girl farewell in a hurry, turned his heel and leaving the place —— immediately after pretending to leave he hid in the shade of a tree nearby, this time, while watching the surroundings, he sneaked in from the side of the front entrance.

Climbing up the tall tree on the side, he jumped to the staircase to the second floor from there.

(.....success!)

The janitor didn’t find him, he finally reached the door of the indoor training field.

The other end was connected to the second floor and roof, so he entered

from there.

This door on the second floor was badly built and not used normally, but just yesterday he just finished the repair chores.

“Great, now I can——!”

Having able to bypassed them and slipped in—— But, Lux regretted instantly “.....A-re?”

A few seconds after he stepped in, the inside of his head turned white.

Looking from the second floor, he saw the training ground filled with skin color.

This vast space was covered with smooth floor, the floor also had a layer of red carpet.

Girls in underwear were arranged in rows, and undressed uniforms were put here and there.

“——Uwaa!?”

Lux involuntarily averted his eyes, and he hid in the shadows nearby.

After a few seconds of confusion, Lux finally realized the fact.

(Per, perhaps this is — body measurement!?)

To handle the Drag-ride, accurate information such as height and weight as well as simple physical ability were important.

And, as expected, they couldn't let Lux do it together.

“You'll work alone after this” the meaning of this sentence, Lux finally understood.

(——Argh, It's not time to think about such thing! I have to get out of here quickly!) Lux reflexively left the second floor back to the stairs and between the entrance, and then he heard the footsteps coming closer, he had to hide again in the shadows.

“Strange? I heard something from here a little while ago.....”

“Yeah? I thought this doorway could not be used, but the door is open?”

“.....!?”

- Kacha*, the door was opened, and the two janitor girls appeared from behind.

Fortunately, the second floor usually had no people, so the table, chairs, stuffed with non-slip mat wooden box, exercise equipment, things that weren't used were piled here, there were many places to hide.

However, there was only one way, so it was impossible to go out.

If he was found at this point, of course, Lux would be caught as a peeping devil.

(Why, why is there such a thing.....!?)

He was starting to lament to god.

If they were only doing physical measurements, it was unlikely that Lux's Sword Device would be immediately pulled out, but the girl student who took "Bahamut" would notice it sooner or later.

Therefore, there was only one choice left.

(There, there's no choice, I have to do it now!)

He must somehow elude the eyes of the girls, then retrieve the Sword Device "Bahamut".

Lux took a deep breath and decided to prepare, and walked up the passage on the second floor, which turned into a mid-sized storehouse.

The girls behind, because they had a role as a lookout, they shouldn't be able to leave outside soon.

As long as he stayed on the second floor, then he should be less likely to be found, but just in case, Lux put the tablecloth on the side to cover his body.

Then he crept out of the shadows, looking at the situation from the gap between the handrail.

Lux tried not to see the girl's skin as much as possible and carefully searched, finally he found the girl and the Sword Device.

(Great, I found it—— but how do I get it out?)

If he went down to the first floor where the physical measurement was being done, Lux surely would be found.

However, it seemed that the measurement was being carried out didn't use all of the training field.

If he moved to other rooms, because there was less eyes around, he could get close without being detected.

Lux adorned the tablecloth, just ready to go to the corridors outside the training ground—— “Kyaaaaa!?”

Suddenly, outside the training ground sounded the shrill screams of the girls.

“Ku....!?”

He thought that his heart would stop due to fear.

However, it seemed that they didn't discover Lux.

“What, what? What happened !?”

“It is said that there is a suspicious man outside, some students saw him secretly slipped into the campus!”

“The peeping tom came again!? But the date of the measurement has been changed every time——”

Then, the training ground became noisy.

Several female instructors shouted “Please calm down”, but once spread, the fuss couldn't died down and accelerated more and more.

Uneasily Lux observed the situation downstairs from the shadow, his eyes met with Noct who was wearing a garter belt attached underwear.

“.....!?”

Lux had just wanted to confirm that first year girl, but the result was that he was accidentally found by others, this was bad! Lux's heartbeat began to accelerate.

“.....”

Noct's eyes slightly opened wide, she blushed a bit, but she immediately averted her line of sight.

Apparently she seemed to have guessed that there were some reasons, so she let Lux relax without concern.

“... Wait a moment!? Someone is on the second stairwell!?”

A scream of a girl who climbed up from another place struck where Lux was hiding.

(Damn.....!?)

Because the incident disrupted his position, so his body also stood up slightly, the result was that he was exposed.

But fortunately he was also dressed in tablecloths, so they didn't see his face, but this was only a matter of time.

Lux flew out of the shadows, and ran through the passage in full force.

He only heard screams of the girls who saw him came from behind.

For the time being, it was necessary to take off the tablecloth somewhere no one could see.

“Why, why does it look like the first time I come to the academy.....!?”

Lux kicked the door, jumped from the middle of the stairs and onto the grass, rushed into the empty campus, and then ran to school.

(Since everyone is doing physical measurement, there should not be anyone in the classroom yet——) Lux thought so, but

“Kya——!? Oh no!? Someone entered the school building! Call for help!?”

In the corridor he could see a girl wearing a green bow tie——a third year girl hurriedly escaped.

(Not good!? Wrong move!?)

Instructor Raigree said, “Do not get close to the library and girls' dormitory.”

It was here that the girls who finished the body measurement returned and changed their clothes.

That meant——In the vicinity of this, there was a high possibility that there were girls in uniforms who had already finished changing clothes.

“Stop! Call for backup quickly!”

Along with the voice from behind, came the following footsteps of the students.

With the cloth covering his head, his vision was poor so he couldn't run fast.

As he came to the stairs, Lux rushed to the second floor of the school building.

Fortunately there was no one in the front, but the footsteps of the pursuers were increasing.

“Ku.....!?”

(I can't shake them off! I must——make a gamble!)

In a desperate moment, Lux took off the table cloth in the last resort, and pushed open the door of the reception room for guests.

From the scene just now, there should be a lot of students who had not finished the measurement.

Especially in this reception room, the possibility that students were changing clothes was low.

Lux thought so, and slid in with desperation.

“——A.”

Unfortunately, he lost the bet.

“.....!?”

The room was full of luxurious ornaments, the ground was also covered with red carpet.

In the familiar living room, a breathtaking scene was spreading.

Carefully cared honey color long hair, under it was a pair of deeply transparent jade eyes.

Among the body which was tall and well-balanced, the rich chest bulge that stuck out tightly, this contrast to the flawless glamour gave a vibe of dangerous

beauty at first glance, making her more vivid and attractive.

And her awe-inspiring atmosphere, with her appearance complemented each other.

This great nobleman daughter of this caliber was as if the girl was specially tailored.

Standing there was the most well-known academy strongest Drag-Knight, third year Celistia Ralgris.

She was wearing light blue underwear, with her uniform neatly folded in front of her.



“Wha, wha-wha-wha——what are you doing, Lux!? I am——”

After freezing for a few seconds, Celis screamed with red face.

“So, sorry!? There’s a reason——!”

When Lux was trying to defend himself in a hurry, the sound of running outside the corridor was heard.

- Konkon*, after a light knock, a voice was spoken without waiting for a reply.

“Excuse me, did someone come here!? Looks like a peeping tom entered into the campus, we were chasing this far——”

“.....”

To the voice of a girl who seemed to be a third year, Celis glanced at Lux with a combination of shame and anger.

When Lux lowered his head apologetically, Celis let out a sigh “Haa.....”, and raised her voice toward the outside girl.

“I didn’t see anyone suspicious. I will help as soon as I’m done changing clothes.”

“Thank you! Well then!”

And, along with the answer, the girl’s footsteps could be heard moving away from the outside of the living room.

A couple of seconds after the greatest crisis had passed.

Celis covered her lacy underwear with her hand, looking seriously at Lux.

“Ano, Celis-senpai, this is——”

“Really ... I didn’t think there will be a scene where you would do such a thing”

With her face faintly dyed red, Celis angrily muttered.

The muttering of the girl who trusted him struck him with guilt, but there was no time to feel depressed.

“Wait, please wait! Actually ...”

“Lux, peeking on girl changing clothes is not good, you know?”

Celis scolded, with a tone for speaking to children who did mischief.

Her face was full of shyness and angry, this scene made people felt freshness, it could somewhat be said to be quite cute.

“Haa, what a shock. I never think Lux would do this, what happened to you? I have never scolded a young boy, so I am troubled, what a headache— That, especially in this kind of situation, I don’t know what to do.”

Holding her chest with both her hands, Celis talked to herself.

For some reason her appearance looked extremely grave, Lux got stiff and forgot to say his excuse.

“——That’s it. This is the solution.”

“Yes!?”

Celis, whose eyes were suddenly shining, looked straight at Lux.

“In our Ralgris family of the Four Great Noble, I heard rumors that there are traditional methods of mental correction for vassals. It seems there is a need to go deep in an isolated mountain for two weeks, then soon Lux should also regain his original beautiful heart.”

“When that is over, it definitely will not be the original me, isn’t it!?”

Celis confidently said, while Lux desperately denied.

“That, that’s not the case, this is a bit, I have personal complicated circumstances! I, I will accept punishment for this later, for now ——”

Then, Lux pleaded with sincerity.

Celis who saw it stopped moving as if confused, then she began to think.

“Lux’s circumstances.....By any chance, that is, I heard rumor from Sharis, some trouble that only male has..... is it?”

Celis whispered, her face showed a little confused expression.

Then, Celis seemed to have decided, she released her hands exposing her

body in lingerie.

“.....I, I get it. If Lux says that much, I, I’ll only allow a little bit. But, but this is, a secret to other students, okay?”

“What are you talking about!?”.

Hearing Celis said something so frightening, Lux unexpectedly blurted out.

He didn’t know what kind of misunderstanding she had, but she definitely wasn’t thinking the same thing as he was.

In a hurry he explained about his Sword Device to her, Celis suddenly realized.

“This, this is serious! I’ll help as soon as I finished changing clothes, so quickly ——“

“I’m sorry! Thank you!”

Lux somehow got forgiven, and started to run out of the living room.

He passed through the corridor so as to avoid being seen, trying to escape the school building for the time being.

But after a moment’s delay, Lux noticed that it was an incredibly bad idea.

“Ha.....!?”

Was it because the student found him, or he was quite shaken by the sight of Celis in her underwear, he couldn’t focus anymore.

However, the students who already wore uniforms had gathered in the downstairs of the school building which could be seen from the staircase, and escape was impossible without being seen.

(Dammit.....!? That’s——I can’t get out!)

Not long after Lux felt shaken, he heard footsteps approaching from the bottom of the stairs.

Since downstairs was certainly dangerous, then he could only escape to the roof.

When Lux embraced the last trace of hope by opening the door, suddenly someone from behind seized his wrist.

“——Eh?”

Suddenly there was a strong trembling feeling running across his spine, Lux hurriedly looked back.

“Ara? I was wondering who made a sudden visit——so it was you, my lord?”

“.....Yoruka!? Why are you here!? ——And, what’s with that outfit?”

Seeing someone who was so unexpected, Lux couldn’t help but opened his mouth wide.

A beautiful black hair girl showing a bewitching smile.

With perfect body curve, the girl, who had different eye color blue and purple on the left and right pupil, her name was Kirihome Yoruka.

In the past she was an assassin known as “The Empire’s Assassin Blade” serving the Old Empire, she was an exotic girl with unparalleled ability as a Drag-Knight.

Although they opposed each other for a short time because of her loyalty to the old empire and her purpose of “rebuilding the empire”, now she had sworn to become Lux’s faithful servant and had been doing her duty.

Currently in order to secure her position, with Headmaster Relie’s help her admission procedures into the academy should be arranged but—— “Yes, a few days ago they also helped me prepare this uniform. How do I look? My lord?”

Usually Yoruka always wore a dark exotic dress, today was the first time he saw her in school uniform.

Her bountiful chest wrapped in the blouse, and glossy lustrous thigh lines extending from the skirt, her beauty was dazzling.

Although it was surprising to see in a glance, but because she had good looks from the start, there was not much discomfort from her appearance.

“A, yeah, it suits you.... Wait, it’s not the time for that ——”

Lux said shyly, but then he immediately recovered himself.

The girls who were searching in the school building seemed to be coming to the roof soon.

In a hurry, Lux told her about the Sword Device of “Bahamut” being taken by mistake, as well as about the peeping tom coming to the campus which caused the commotion.

“I see, it’ll be good to get back the Sword Device from that first year girl—— and for my lord to be found here at school, it would be bad..... is that it?”

Yoruka let out a smile, then she approached Lux.

During this time they heard the commotion of the girls downstairs.

“Wait, not here either? I wonder where he went?”

“There’s still the rooftop——could it be?”

Words like that could be heard, it was a desperate situation.

“What should I do, Yoruka? If this goes on——”

Lux had no choice but to ask, Yoruka revealed a bright smile.

“This is simple, my lord. I have a plan.”

She gently brought her lips to Lux’s ear and whispered.

“Wait!? Anything, but that——!?”

“If we don’t do it fast, they’ll come here, right?”

Yoruka emerged a mischievous smile, then she crawled her hands into Lux’s clothes.

Then, her suggestion was carried out——3 minutes later.

- Don*, the roof door was flung open violently, the girls who were chasing him looked around, they noticed someone’s shadow from behind the wall and called out.

“Hey, did someone come here!? Someone like a peeping——”

“No one came here from a while ago? I’m a bit busy now, so can we do that later?”

Faced with the urgent tone of the female students, Yoruka answered lightly.

Of course, they didn’t give up just like that.

“Maybe he hid somewhere. Let’s have a little look——..... ! ?”

The sound of them becoming petrified, even Lux could hear it.

They saw, lying on the rooftop’s floor and tangling each other, the appearance of two girls.

One of them, was a girl with beautiful black hair that fell on her own skin——
Kirihime Yoruka



唇を離した夜架の舌先から、
透明な銀の糸が引く。

「——!?!」

And the other one, being pressed under, was a girl wearing a blouse and a skirt.

Hidden by Yoruka's hand which was holding her Sword Device, the girl's face couldn't be seen, but it was obvious that she was a student at this school.

"You, you.....are—— ! ?"

Seeing this, the two female students were speechless.

Only the girl underneath was wearing uniform, Yoruka was riding on her waist, wearing only her top and bottom underwear.

That——couldn't be imagined as anything else but a special tryst between girls.

Looking at the girls who stiffened up with their red faces, Yoruka gently smiled.

"As you can see, we haven't seen any peeping tom. But it would be you two if you were to continue watching like this——"

As she finished, with her gorgeous little lips, she gently overlapped them on the lips of the girl lying underneath.

Lips and tongues, engaged in a long tangling movement.

"—— ! ?"

The girl underneath let out a muffled voice.

After about ten seconds, the kiss was over, Yoruka loosened her lips, and a transparent silver string was trailing from her tongue..

Immediately after seeing that, Yoruka gazed again and the girls retreated.

"Well, then please enjoy yourself!"

"Sor, sorry for disturbing!"

The door of the rooftop was closed violently, and there was sounds of footsteps running away.

After a while, screams telling that they had lost sight of the peeping tom in school resounded.

“Well, looks like it’s fine now.”

As Yoruka heard it, she crawled down from Lux’s body, Lux murmured in a dying state.

“I thought everything was lost

Or, it was better to say he’d die if this were exposed.

And not to mention Lux’s mental state, as the only male student in the academy, he’d certainly kneel.

“My Lord is exaggerating. Just let bygone be bygone.”

“Although it seems like I’ve lost something important, but thank you....”

Lux thanked her, turned and began to take off the uniform.

Yoruka proposed a plan to fool the girls—That was for Lux to wear Yoruka’s new uniform, it could be described as a taboo approach.

“Just, just that—there’s no need for the kissing part, right....?”

When Lux turned his face red and raised a voice of embarrassment, Yoruka showed a little bewitching smile.

“It was not unnecessary. And my lord response to women, after this time I can begin to understand.”

“.....”

After all, her actual age should be one year younger than his, Lux felt speechless.

“Then I am going to get back to my lord Sword Device. Please wait for a while, then look for opportunities to return from the roof to the school building.”

“A, yeah. I’ve troubled you.”

Saying it in a monotone, Lux reluctantly nodded.

When Yoruka who once again wore her uniforms went down the stairs, Lux was released from tension and he sighed.

About the Sword Device, it would be better to leave it to Celis and Yoruka.

“Ha, somehow, I’m exhausted.....”

While looking at the clear sky, Lux powerlessly sat down.

Part 3

A few minutes later. After, Lux's Sword Device came back to his hand without being noticed by anyone.

It seemed that the Triads and Airi also cooperated under Celis's command, and came looking for Lux on the rooftop and handed it to him.

"Thank you— —And sorry for the trouble."

While giving thanks to the girl, Lux was able to get out of the school building "Fuu, I'm saved ..."

As he left the school building and wore the Sword Device he just got back, Lux sit on the curb of the courtyard and finally stroked his chest.

Already most students had finished physical measurements and changed their clothes, and had come back to their rooms, Lux decided to take a rest for a while "Although I can feel rest assured ... what was the noise a little while ago?"

It was a misunderstanding that Lux entered the indoor practice ground, but an incident appeared as an outside peeping tom was entering the school building, which made a serious commotion.

"A peeping tom. So who could it— —"

Tilting his neck, Lux murmured to himself..

Lux was in a daze in the courtyard in autumn where falling leaves were dancing.

"— —You look free, little brat over there."

"..... ! ?"

Because of the unexpected voice from behind, Lux bounced up straight.

A voice of a heavy and deep man, rarely heard in school.

Although in a musical range that could be affirmed as a mature man, but it wasn't loud and rough, it had a unique intonation giving those who heard it a strong impression.

When he turned around, there was a man who he had never seen before.

His appearance was similar to Lux's petite body.

His face looked pretty young, at first glance he looked like a boy, but with somewhat old-fashioned expression and dangerous atmosphere around him, one would hesitate calling him a boy.

He was wearing a slightly dark blue mantle, below that was a black suit, protected by a thin metal armor.

Black hair under the hood, as well as his left eye was wearing a strangely shaped eye patch, decorated with metal pieces.

But, stranger than his appearance, was his eye.

Dark. Bottomless dark. Black pupil, such as the abyss where light could not be seen.

Still, it was strange that his expressions and tone were not somewhat depressing.

A shiny, hard polished black.

He was a man with an atmosphere reminiscent of an obsidian incarnation.

"You are——"

When Lux was being stunned by his atmosphere, the man gently lifted his chin.

"I'm a visitor. I'm looking for the Headmaster for some business. Come show me the way quickly."

"....."

Lux was speechless again when he heard the man's order.

Why a man who looked like a boy like this, being so bossy.

"E, etou——Please wait. In the first place, who are you?"

“You’re a man that really like to ask trivial stuffs? Who am I, how should I say it I wonder?”

His eyes opened wide, the man distorted his mouth into a bow shape, and laughed strangely.

“That won’t do. Because here is within the grounds of the Royal Military Academy, I cannot guide you anywhere unless you tell me who you are. Moreover——I’m kind of busy right now.”

“That’s too bad, but I don’t mind? After you lead me there, I will handle it myself.”

“Not that, I said....”

Even Lux didn’t know how to answer.

Although he experienced doing service business many times while doing chores, he had never met such a domineering guest.

“I don’t know much about details, but it seems an outside peeping tom got inside ——”

“Is that so? It was really troublesome, but it was strange? I was stopped by the guard at the gate earlier, I got in without permission while shaking them off ——I did not see suspicious people in particular.”

“E...?”

As the man calmly uttered these words, Lux had a bad feeling.

Stopped by guards, entered without permission?

Then, don’t tell me——

“Oh? A, you don’t have to say anymore. I get it.”

And, while the man opened his usual eyes with no light, he raised his mouth into a smile, and pounded his hand.

Then he looked straight at Lux and said confidently.

“The culprit is you, with a face like a woman, you transformationist.”

“You’re wrong! It’s you! The peeping intruder who went in without

permission!”

“Oh, I see. This country will treat it like that. It is a cruel custom.”

“Any country will do the same! Please leave the campus quickly!”

“Yare yare. How awful, there was also unreasonable treatment. Even though I was called directly by the Queen of this country, I was told to get out.”

“.....!? What, just now——?”

The moment when Lux showed a dubious face, the man took out a document from his chest pocket and showed it to him.

“A letter from the Queen. Let me say it again. I request you to show me before the school headmaster. New Kingdom chore boy.”

The man said with a sneer.

It seemed that he knew Lux’s position and added inside also a little provocation, Lux decided not to respond to it.

“.....I understand.”

Lux had also seen the Queen’s letter and signature.

Although he did not know who he was, but what the man said was true.

Lux decided to guide the man to the Headmaster’s room.

Fortunately or unfortunately, the body measurement seemed to have ended safely, and no sign of girls could be seen around.

However, unlike the previous time, Lux tightened his face and entered the school building.

He was aware that the unknown man was not a good character.

“It’s a nice academy. Morale is also high, and the level of practice is also so so. It is also interesting to have a policy of educating women who are well-manned in Drag-ride. However, it is unnecessary for my subordinates. Are you not dissatisfied even if you see it?”

After looking around to appraisal, the man spoke unexpectedly.

“What do you mean?”

When Lux returned with a vigilant voice, he heard footsteps from behind. Coming in a hurry, a middle-aged man wearing a robe and two young men. If he remembered correctly, they were the chiefs of the new kingdom and the school secretary.

“This, this is, thank you for coming from such a long trip, sir Singlen. It seems that you came a little bit earlier than the original scheduled time——”

“I’m a busy man unlike you. I do not like being kept waiting so I let myself in. Has the school headmaster known of this meeting?”

“Yes, it has been sent to inform her before.”

Even with the man’s rude attitude, the two men continued to abide by the etiquette, Lux showed a puzzle expression, “It was a hard time chore boy. As a reward, let me give you the honor of knowing my name.”

The black man’s fearless smile, and he spoke his words in a tone that looked down from very high.

“Singlen Shelbrit. Vice captain of states alliance’s Drag-Ride force, the “Seven Dragon Paladin”, affiliated to the Blackend Kingdom, head of the White Ridge Knights regiment, those are——some trivial titles of this great me.”

“”Seven Dragon Paladin”, Vice captain....!?”

Reflectively, Lux repeated like a parrot.

“The troublesome guys call me “Blue Tyrant”. Call me whatever you like, chore boy.”

The threat of Phantom God Beast (Abyss) growing year by year.

To counteract the seven Ruins activating, each country selected one Drag-Knight as their representative, a total of seven Drag-Knights.

It was an elite unit gathering representatives from various countries that would investigate the Ruins with their own authority and acted as a fighting force against those threats in case of emergency.

Not all of them had yet been decided, but among them the captain and the vice captain were judged based from past record, and it seemed to be decided

by discussion.

In other words, it meant that he had such a tremendous outstanding track record on a worldwide scale.

At the last All-Dragon Battle outside of school——The man did not show up because of the restrictions on the official candidate, but there was still stronger people in the world.

(——But, why such a person is in the school of the new kingdom?) No way, was the threat like the Demonic Beast of The End (Ragnarok) approaching?

“Oh, didn’t they tell you? The upper part of the country was also surprisingly scattered.”

As if seeing through Lux’s thought, Singlen mouth bent into a curve.

His obvious imprudent way of speaking made the consul and the secretary behind stunned.

“Don’t worry, my affair here is just an interview. The “Seven Dragon Paladin” of this country has not been decided yet. Before the meeting that takes place in the near future, I hope that each country decides at least one good candidate.”

“.....”

“That’s it. Can you do me one thing, chore boy. I want you to keep a watch on this place. I feel somewhat better than being watched by those two with a thin face.”

In the corridor facing the long courtyard, Singlen said to Lux.

This had been more than the level of rude, it could be said that his mouth was dirty, but Lux wasn’t in the mood to refuse.

“.....It doesn’t guarantee that I will be allowed to do it.”

“It’s done. It’s me who decided it. ——Okay, I’ll leave it to you.”

After that, the man named Singlen went into the Headmaster’s room.

(That man, what on earth was he thinking.....?)

After that, when asking if he could watch over the room to Relie who came, “Really? Then please do so.” he easily got permitted As he was standing in front

of the door for a while, the first who came over was Lisha.

“A-re? If it’s not you, Lux. What are you doing here?”

Looking at the Lux who was watching for some reasons, she widened her eyes surprised.

Perhaps, it was probably that the people who would receive this interview had been decided in advance.

“There was something happening, and then it became such a strange situation.”

“What. I thought I’d have you on the same seat as my knight, that’s a shame.”

Then with a proud face she crossed her arm which looked cute, Lux’s expression also relaxed.

“But——Please be careful. The vice captain of the “Seven Dragon Paladin”, is quite an odd man.”

“Don’t worry. There are many strange people in this school and I am accustomed to dealing with them. Besides——In a way, I’m also the princess of this country.”

She said so confidently, then left a “Then, please stand watching”, she walked inside the room.

Clack, a few minute after the door was closed.

Since he couldn’t freely eavesdropping, Lux was waiting at the distance——
“Haa!? Stop joking! Who are you, calling people like that!?”

Suddenly Lisha roared, it could be heard outside the room.

“No more talking. I’m going home! I don’t have free time to go with your nonsense!”

Then it seemed that the conclusion of the discussion had arrived soon, Lisha came out of the room.

From the outrageous attitude of that Singlen, it was possible to expect it to a certain degree, but this result was still a little surprising for Lux.

Lisha’s character was simple and straightforward on the surface, but in fact

she would use strategy, and also able to see through nature of problems.

For negotiations to break so quickly, it was hard to imagine.

What Singlen was trying to do, Lux was being a little concerned about it.

“What a rude man!? Has the Blackend Kingdom quality become like that!?”

“Ano, Lisha-sama. I understand your feelings, but this is the corridor——”

Seeing steam coming out from Lisha’s head, Lux persuaded her with a wry smile.

Lisha complained for a while then left, and then there was another footstep coming near Lux.

“What a surprise, I didn’t think we could meet here, Lux”

The girl wearing a dignified atmosphere, third year student Celis.

“I was called here, to receive an interview as a candidate for the “Seven Dragons Paladin” of the New Kingdom——Don’t tell me, you too?”

“No, I just have some reasons, I’m supposed to be a guard here.”

“Is that so. I can’t be panicked in front face of my junior. The opponent is the “Blue Tyrant”, I have to keep it in mind.”

Her tone was as serious as usual.

But compared to thinking that was “Really Celis-like”, Lux was more concerned about another word.

“.....About Singlen, do you know something?”

“To some extent ——if you do not mind, can I speak what I know?”

Lux nodded reflexively.

Because time was running out, Celis made it very simple, but Lux learned about Singlen.

A man from the Blackend Kingdom, he emerged immediately as a striking figure after the Drag-Ride was excavated, with overwhelming ability, he climbed to the rank of general.

However, after a period of time, after a large-scale civil strife, he was

punished by the king for his merciless fighting style, it was said that he was robbed of the title knight.

“I don’t know the truth, but the King seems to be afraid of his ability and kept him away from the royal family? There seems to be that theory, Later, Sir Singlen left the Imperial City.”

Lux felt that the theory was highly believable.

An era in which various things suddenly changed due to existence of Drag-ride, which was still about several years after the ruins were found.

There was too strong military Drag-Knight that appeared, it was no wonder that people would fear his growing power.

“However, as we all know, a large-scale natural disaster has occurred in various places, including the Blackend Kingdom from the other day. The existence of a new type of humanoid Phantom God Beast (Abyss) called Nocturnal.....”

After the end of the Dragon Tournament, Lux also learned from Raigree instructor about the matter.

“The Blackend Kingdom lost its main force due to the battle, I heard that Sir Singlen was called to the King’s Castle again. Just before the former king was killed in battle and was substituted.”

“.....”

“That’s all I know. Then, I’ll go first.”

As Celis finished saying, she quickly went into the Headmaster’s room.

Unlike Lisha, if it was Celis who didn’t act straightforwardly, she would be able to avoid being on the same pace as Singlen. Lux thought.

“Yes. Is, that so....? No, I am honored to be praised. But——eh?”

Although he had no attention of eavesdropping, but he could hear a relatively calm voice.

It seemed that the meeting was over in a matter of minutes, Celis came out of the Headmaster’s room.

Her face was a bit confused.

“What happened?”

“No, nothing special....I got praised for my quality as a Drag-Knight, but the details about the subject, he seems to be avoiding it.”

“Avoiding the main issue?”

“And, of course, these contents should not be revealed to others, so let it be ——”

“Ah, I’m sorry.”

With Celis words, Lux also noticed the danger of his remark.

Soon after he regretted asking promptly, Singlen patted Lux on the shoulder.

“It’s over, chore boy. Come and see me outside. That’s my last request.”

“.....understood.”

Lux nodded and walked by Singlen’s side.

Did they know the news of Singlen coming to the academy?

The appearance of the girl students looking at Lux in a long distance was seen in some places.

“——You don’t ask me what I said to the two in the interview?”

“If you don’t mind, please tell me.”

“That won’t do. Can’t tell you.”

“.....Is that so.”

As Lux tone was mixed with a sigh, Singlen quivered his shoulders and laughed.

“Kukukuku, don’t make such a face. Do you think it’s hard to understand? A man purposely received a royal command from the Blackend Kingdom to come all the way here, why did he take a stuffy attitude towards those two girls?”

“.....”

The eye reflecting the bottomless darkness looked into Lux’s face.

His eye was not laughing.

Only his mouth was slightly bowed and distorted.

“Can you see through my intention? Chore-doing criminal.”

“.....from the beginning you have no intentions of discussing. Is that right?”

Lux answered immediately.

Thinking carefully, it was very unnatural from the beginning.

He visited the academy half a day earlier than planned, and also entered the campus without permission despite being stopped.

At first glance he seemed to be just rude and arrogant, but this man who climbed up to the position of the royal knight's leader, there was no way he didn't understand how to behave.

That was, contrary to the fact that the candidate must be determined as soon as possible, he didn't intend to achieve his goal from the start.

“Is that all? Well, it's only half of it. How disappointing. The worth of your head was only a little more precious than the majority of the country council.”

“What does that mean?”

“Your understanding is really bad. Has your intuition slowed down just by taking care of the ladies.”

Singlen turned a wicked smile at Lux.

“I'm willing to put the story together. We'll talk here. Haven't I told you some hints? Didn't I let you stand there deliberately, and let you hear our discussion?”

“——could it be.”

At this moment, Lux was aware of Singlen's intentions.

“You, chore boy. The “Weakest Undefeated”, former Acardia Empire Seventh Princes Lux Arcadia. I came to scout you out. As one of the “Seven Dragon Paladin”.”

“.....!?”

Surprised and shocked, it penetrated Lux's body at the same time, he was petrified.

"Are you surprised? You thought that you were not supposed to be chosen? If so you're stupid. Compare to 5 years ago, has this peaceful days turned you into a fool. Like this kingdom."

"Are you seriously saying that? To me——"

"This is a boring conversation. Please stop acting in front of me. I need to pull the strongest man in this country as the vice captain of the "Seven Dragon Paladin". Not just on the surface, but the truly strong."

"....."

How far this guy knows about myself?

However, even if he saw through Lux's identity as "Bahamut" user, Lux couldn't admit he was the "Black Hero".

"Although I was certainly recommended from the consular officers of the kingdom to be the candidate for the "Seven Dragon Paladin", I do not think that I am suitable, and I don't intend to do so."

Although being on alert, Lux's voice was unwavering, Singlen continued.

"Don't say such childish words. You used to be more adult like. No—Or that you just put on a mature look? In any case, you showed such performance at that age, you are not an ordinary man and you have qualifications for being the representative."

There was decisiveness in his tone.

This tone was like he knew that Lux had destroyed the old empire in the past, Lux further raised his vigilance.

"Do you know——about me and the Old Empire?"

"It's not like I don't know. The upper part of the Old Empire had been associated with the Blackend Kingdom. Oh, I was getting along with your older brother from that time. Was his name Fugil Acardia?"

".....!"

Instantly hearing these words, Lux gasped.

Although he wanted to conceal his own shaking, but that man might have been seen through him.

“It seems he’s missing since the coup d’état five years ago, but I don’t think the guy will die easily, do you know something?”

“No.....I know nothing.”

“Well, that’s a pity ... No, actually, the other day, I heard a story that my subordinate saw a man looking like Fugil.”

“——Is that, true?”

“You want to know? Just tell me. What, if you become one of the “Seven Dragon Paladin”, the opportunity to continue talking to me would come soon.”

“.....then, can I ask one last question?”

“It’s fine. But make it quick, time is precious. Even gold can’t buy my time.”

Conceit, bold, and fearless.

Singlen nodded, with an arrogant attitude befitting the title “Blue Tyrant”.

“What is your real purpose? Promoting me to join the “Seven Dragon Paladin”, it isn’t just simply to bring stability to the world isn’t it?”

“.....Fu, what a troublesome kid. I was suspected quite a lot.”

The school ground was surrounded by tall walls.

They had arrived near the gate.

“My mission and purpose are to protect this world, as a Drag-Knight, as the commander of Drag-Knight, what else is there?”

“Well, I will talk about my purpose. I’ll tell you as a chore prince, I will protect this academy, I will become the power of everyone who goes here, it is now my wish.”

He didn’t know Singlen’s true intention.

As a “Seven Dragon Paladin”, why did he seek Lux’s power so much.

However, regardless of what the other side’s intention, Lux had decided the

answer.

He once concealed his identity and destroyed the Old Empire, it was Lux's wish.

He tried to make a country without unreasonable tyranny and unjustifiable discrimination.

And now, to protect this new kingdom from the threat from other countries and Phantom God Beasts (Abyss), to support the power of the countries of the young girls with his own strength.

For that reason, he became an exclusive knight of Princess Lisha.

"Ha ha ha. How awful, negotiation breakup, it's a shame, my time has been wasted. I wanted you to be a "Seven Dragon Paladin" even now."

Singlen tilted his head slightly, only his mouth revealed that strange smile, staring at Lux's face.

Lux also returned a resolute line of sight to his opponent, just outside, seven people wearing white helmet and cloak covering their faces, immediately came up to stop the two.

"My lord. We come to pick you up, it's about time to leave the kingdom."

".....I understand. Farewell, orphan of the old empire—— "The weakest undefeated". You have to work hard to fulfill your wishes."

Saying that with a loud tone, Singlen walked out of the campus, and looked back.

"But remember, never, will your wish comes true. Because I've never failed to achieve my purpose, and what you really want, is just boring self-sacrificing. —Well then, let's meet again, Hero."

"....."

Even after hearing that final word, Lux didn't even blink an eye.

"The Blue Tyrant" and his followers gradually disappeared from the field of vision.

The breathless encounter was over.

But, why.

Even though they didn't resemble each other, an air somewhat like his older brother Fugil, Lux could sense it from Singlen.

Part 4

“So the result, “Over Limit” can no longer be used?”

In the school ground after the storm had left.

In the Drag-ride workshop (Atelier), Lisha who was wearing a white gown said so suddenly.

“Yes, it seems so.”

Putting his waist on the workbench, Lux answered Lisha who was watching him, and released “Bahamut” armor.

A special system which released the output restriction of the Drag-ride which was usually restricted to avoid the burden of body and mind, Limit Break (Over Limit).

For a while, it was thought that Lux’s body could not bear it, so it was forbidden to use it since the training camp, and as his physical condition stabilized now, in order to be prepared, he tried to repeat the steps but was unsuccessful.

“But it’s strange. Don’t you remember it? The way of perfect Limit Break (Over Limit), even I don’t know it clearly——”

“I do not know. Why only that time, I can do it——”

I remember seeing the method of Limit Break (Over Limit) that La Cruche had done as the Ruin’s Supervisor (Gear Leader), I wonder if that was the reason for my memories?

(.....Memory? No, I should have used the Limit Break (Over Limit) for the first time at that time. Or——)

Am I forgetting something? Lux mind emerged this question.

“It may be because Phi-chan was there. Maybe I forgot something——”

“.....!? That, that airhead girl has nothing to do with this!? That.... this is still a problem, I’ll think about it myself. Hum.”

After hearing Lux murmuring to himself, Lisha somehow anxiously shouted.

Lux tilted his head curiously, as time went by.

Episode 2 – Ruin City (Ruin's Gear)

Part 1

Two days later.

A total of sixty students, who passed the simulation tests at school, and several men from the military, who took the test together, left on a journey to the Principality of Wanheim.

Although the area was smaller than the New Kingdom, the Principality of Wanheim also had vast borders, so it was also ranked as one of the big countries.

The season was now early autumn, but Wanheim's climate was still very warm, so everyone was happy that they did not have to wear warm clothing.

The downside was that the one-way trip lasted for over four days.

They sometimes traveled by boat from the harbor, sometimes crossing national borders and would encounter wild animals and bandits, and also needed to use Drag-Ride to fly through shortcuts.

But they still mainly rode carriage to the test site at Ruin's Gear.

Initially, everyone was excited to see the exotic people and landmarks, and were all jumping in enthusiasm, but after four tired days of travelling on carriage, they became more obedient.

"But this is really troublesome, why do we have to travel this way every time, just directly use Drag-Ride to fly over is way better."

Located at the back of the wagon, Lisha boringly looked out of the window.

"Because you cannot run out of strength before the test, otherwise we'll be putting the cart before the horse? After all, others cannot use Drag-Ride casually like us."

"Muu....."

Sitting opposite to her while calmly reading, Krulcifer whispered a reminder.

Although having seated on the bumpy carriage for so long, she still looked quite refreshed, which made Lux admired her.

"Kuu.....Lu, chan."

At the same time, Philuffy, who early had entered her beautiful dream, leant her body on to Lux.

In order to not give her extra burden, Lux didn't want to wake her up so he kept still, but her plentiful twin peaks happened to touch his arms. Moreover, as the carriage kept bumping, Lux's arm was buried deeper into her elastic chest, which couldn't help but made Lux's heart raced.

"Hey, that Tennen Boke (natural air head)! Don't get too close! Lux is troubled!?"

Lisha, who had been sitting next to that scene, finally could not hold it in anymore and yelled.

".....Aa, I don't mind, just let her sleep."

Lux smiled wryly to soothe down Lisha.



“That’s right. To be precise, you don’t feel troubled, but feel happy ——Or, you look very happy, you aren’t saying this just to sit next to her, are you?”

Krulcifer snapped close the book, and then stared coldly there.

“It, it’s not like that!? Krulcifer-san, don’t say such strange thing——Uwa!?”

While Lux couldn’t bear the despises of the two young girls and was stumbling around——

- Duang! *

Suddenly a deep bell resounded.

”——E?”

That sound and the one from the Cross Field were different; it had a slightly solemn and calm tone, which made Lux speechless for a moment.

“Everyone, take a break for a bit. If anyone still has the strength to get down from the carriage and look, you can see good things.”

Soon after he heard Relie’s voice, Lux gently straightened Philuffy, opened the curtains and looked out the carriage.

Then——

”Uwa.”

He couldn’t help but issue a sound of admiration.

”.....Amazing.”

”Beautiful....There actually is such a city.”

The girls jumped down from the carriage parked on the hillside and as they saw this scene, they also let out sounds of admiration.

Reflected in their eyes were the majestic white gold walls surrounding the octagonal city.

There were watch towers located at each of the eight corners, surrounding the giant hemispherical palace in the middle, divided into beautiful blocks dotted with numerous jungle and clear lakes.

Inside those blocks, one could also see lots of house built with red bricks and buildings made out of marbles, with distinct order of elevation, covering the entire block in bright colors.

Antique castles and buildings were characteristics of the city.

People probably built up this city based on that theme.

"The Ruin City, Ruin's Gear. Right now, inside of the Principality of Wanheim it can be compared with the capital as big cities."

Jumping off from the carriage next to Lux, the Academy Headmaster and also Philuffy's sister——Relie came to them and said.

"Ruin, City (Ruin's, Gear)"

In his childhood, back when he started living inside the Old Empire palace, Lux had heard about this city.

The Second Ruin "Dungeon" was located just below the city, and it had already been integrated with the city.

The city had set up a lot of defense bases to combat the Abyss that came out from inside the ruin, at the same time there was also research of the treasures that were excavated from the ruin, causing this place to become a stage for the research institutions to compete.

Built in the center was a palace, the upper part was the residential area which was called as the Canopy, the middle had a big opening, and underground there was a gate that connected to the Dungeon.

Originally, if there was no exploration license you couldn't go into the Ruin, but because of this site was too special, so to a certain extent it could be an exception.

"I used to come here to negotiate, but this is my first time coming here since I became the headmaster. Wait till after going through this mountain we will be able to get to the Ruin City immediately."

"Yeah, right on time, I'm also feeling a little motion sickness, I can breathe out a little after hearing that."

Lux sighed with relief, Relie smiled at him and said.

"You have nothing else to say? But well, this is Lux's style."

"What do you mean?"

Lux was puzzled a little, Relie revealed a rare subtle expression, and then remove her line of sight.

"The messenger from the palace told me, that you acted as the bait for the "Imperial Capital Recapture Plan" in order to save me? Sorry, only now I come to say thank you."

"You really don't need to thank me, I also volunteered to do so. As Airi said, I'm just messing around."

Lux said with a wry smile, Relie also faintly smiled and said.

"You really haven't changed at all, really——It's great to have you beside Phi."

Relie seemed to think so from her heart, but the fact was, it was Lux who wanted to say those words.

When he was little, Lux witnessed the Old Empire abandoned its citizens when they were in dangers and fell into a hell of despair. If not for Philuffy who saved him at the time, his future would not have been as bright.

(That's right, that time——to create a happy life for Airi and Philuffy, I vowed to be at war with the Old Empire.)

This was the only desire that the young Lux craved.

In order to achieve this desire, Lux studied from his imperial brother Fugil, read all of the books in the palace and devoted himself in Drag-Ride training.

At that time, he firmly believed that, as a member of the royal family, he would be able to do it——

However, in the end he didn't achieve it.

Just before Lux seized the answer to his conviction, the unfinished result was taken away.

After that, he then traveled around the country as a chore prince to observe the situation after the revolution, and finally came to the school to get a new life.

Right now——

“At the very least, just treat this as an elder person meddling with other’s businesses, but I think you should be more concerned about yourself. If you have any troubles later, you can absolutely shrink away from responsibility and let the adults go solve it. At least I don’t want you to have bad memories because of me.”

“If Relie-san is in jail, I and Philuffy will be sad.”

“Is that so.....Maybe you’re right.”

Lux immediately replied, Relie smiled.

“Headmaster, it’s almost time to go.”

At this moment, instructor Raigree came up and said so, Relie nodded.

“Alright, then let’s go. If Phi is still sleeping, I’ll trouble you to go wake her up.”

“Yes.”

Lux nodded his head and went back to the carriage.

After another thirty minutes, they reached the Ruin City (Ruin’s Gear) of the Principality of Wanheim.

Part 2

Going through Ruin City (Ruin's Gear) main heavy door and advancing on the clean and smooth road for ten minutes, they finally reached the military installation site that conducts the tests, in addition to the dormitory at the side.

The military facility covered an area almost the same size as the kingdom's Academy, but it excelled even the city of Cross Field in term of the number of facilities After getting permission to go through the gate, they began to unload the luggage from the carriage.

After entering the facility surrounded by walls, Lux looked around for a moment, immediately he found a familiar group of girls.

"Faa! I'm really tired.....The carriage was way too crowded, my waist and butt are killing me.....A, Lux-chi, how are you?"

Tillfur greatly stretched her entire body, and she waved her hand when she spotted Lux.

Then, he also saw Sharis and Noct who just finished unloading luggage—— They were well known in the Academy as the Triad, at the same time he saw his sister Airi.

"You've worked hard. And also——Thank you for taking care of Airi."

Before departure, because Airi looked a bit strange, Lux was worried a bit, so he asked the three who boarded on the same carriage to look out for her.

"Please do not arbitrarily ask them to do such a strange thing. But for nii-san to care about such a thing, it's really unexpected."

At most, the person of concern Airi was a little embarrassed till her cheek was red, furthermore she stared at Lux intensely.

"Ara ara~, Lux-kun is worrying about you, Airi-chan, this time you should frankly thank him, isn't harmony between sibling a very good thing?"

Sharis cheerfully smiled while stroking Airi's head, Noct also spoke.

"No, I think this is because Airi has her pride, after all in daily life, she wanted to be of help to Lux-san."

"Wait.....Noct, don't say such baseless words! It's because my brother is always reckless, so I have to be worry about things— —"

"A~Noct, Airi-chan is actually a good girl."

"Ahaha....."

Looking at Tillfur's smile, Lux smiled wryly, but his heart was relieved.

(That's good, although I'm concerned about her situation, at least it seems okay.) Taking a break after finishing uploading their luggage, they were greeted by the military officers and cadets of the Principality of Wanheim, who brought everyone to visit their dormitory.

First were introduction of the facilities and basic rules.

To introduce all kinds of facilities from eating, bathing, resting, treatment, sleeping, and how to use them, Lux's group was walked through the entire place.

Because they had not yet see the street outside so they were not clear, but these were Drag-Ride related facilities, so extra efforts were put in the desire, causing the standard of living here somewhat even better compared to the Cross Field city.

However, because of the Ruin's Gear's own unique terrain, compared with the Cross Field city, its structures were more compact and complex, easy to get lost before one got used to it.

"Say, the soldiers of this country all seem to be belligerents, their gaze toward us is stinging."

Walking along the road, Lisha suddenly whispered.

Female basically had better constitution to use the Drag-Ride—— although this was the truth, not just the "men first women second" country like Arcadia Old Empire, countries that truly training female Drag-Knight to expand their own military power were not many.

Basically, the concept of “war is a man’s duty” was entrenched in many countries.

Even some countries that promoted equality between men and women, female soldiers were at the maximum up to no more than thirty percent.

Due to that, although this place had many female aristocrats and he thought it was one of the special cases, in reality the actual situation did not seem so.

Listening carefully, he could hear the men from the Principality of Wanheim standing around were quietly discussing.

“Look, they are the group of people known as the new generation of the New Kingdom Academy.”

“What, they’re all girls. Even if they have the advantage of having high compatibility to Drag-Ride, but not to the degree of calling themselves “the new era,” it seems like their male soldiers has no future.”

“You see, that’s the rumored Prince of the declined Old Empire, as if also want to challenge the test this time. Obviously he was just a collared dog of the Queen, but still be able to look so calm, he really is shameless——,”

Most of the soldiers were throwing curious glances, but some rude soldiers were still whispering with each others.

“Fuu…….”

Lisha had been ignoring these ridicules, but she still stared back with a dissatisfied look when she walked past.

“Lisha-sama, please be moderate.”

Lux quietly stopped her, Lisha sighed softly.

“.....I know, I cannot simply be provoked by this kind of weeds, but they still make a fool out of my knight, which made me really angry.”

“As long as you feel so in your heart, I have been very satisfied.”

“Furthermore, if we really follow them to “make it clear”, we will need to have an excuse. What a shame.”

Lisha revealed a dangerous smile, Lux cannot help but smile wryly.

Actually, Lux was not angry.

After all, for them, only because they were ignorant of what happened abroad, they could only make subjective assumptions based on some groundless rumors.

No, not only that, based purely on the past struggles between the Principality of Wanheim and the Old Empire, only being targeted by this level of ridicule was a blessing.

And— —

"Right, next I'm going to go someplace else, we are to dismiss here."

When Lux was contemplating, Raigree-sensei stopped and announced.

"Those who want to rest follow me back to the dormitory. As for those who want to visit other places – right, Dilwy-dono, can I trouble you?"

"E.....!? A, Ha, haa....., I know."

Giving that jumbled reply was a New Kingdom military officer who accompanied the group; a man named Dilwy Froias, a noble.

He had slender body and delicate features, which was very rare in the army, but gave an impression of being indecisive.

The young man was very honest and serious, but because of his unambitious air, on the contrary it caused people to not be confident in him.

"Speak louder when you say it! My substitute should not act like this!"

"A, yes, sorry. Ok, leave it to me."

Dilwy looked a bit embarrassed and confused for a moment before answering with a wry smile.

Although Raigree-sensei exploded just now, she immediately returned her calm and left with the rest of the classmates.

"Well, shall we go? First of all... Yes, let's go and have a look at the exercise field."

Dilwy led everyone to visit the exercise field.

"I always feel that, he is not the same as a normal male officer, completely unreliable....."

Lisha looked at him and sighed.

"That's not completely the case."

At this time, Sharis came and gave an unexpected reply.

"Although he is now resigned from the front line, but he is, the same as Raigree-sensei, also one of the New Kingdom's number one Drag-Knight; his personality is also very honest, and he will also meticulously face any missions, he is very well-known in the army."

"Is that, so?"

Lisha was a bit surprised, Sharis also continue very emotionally.

"A few years ago, I had also received his sword guidance, he had several times went abroad to improve his sword technique, and thus became a first-class Drag-Knight. For his craftsmanship and weapons, he had also won the title 'Silver Flash'."

As expected from the daughter of the Duke House, of one of the Four Great Nobles.

She was probably well aware of story of nobles, so she was very clear in her description.

"Hm. But it's really strange. If in the New Kingdom right now, there is such a 'male expert', it will certainly already become a topic...."

Hearing Lisha's question, Sharis lowered her voice.

"I heard that during the revolution he was traveling abroad and injured his right hand. Due to that he can no longer display his original strength — so don't ask him about these things, okay?"

"I know, I won't ask."

Was it because she saw some hidden circumstances in the matter? Lisha did not ask anymore and replied honestly.

(Because of being injured that he couldn't fight as before..... huh?) Listening

to Dilwy's cruel experience, as Lux was thinking about it, he suddenly heard the sounds of footsteps from behind.

"Hoo, this is interesting. I heard there's a group of representatives from the far away Arcadia Empire coming——Kukukuku, it seems like they're nothing much."

Showed up in front of them was a group of large people, dressed in male military uniforms——they were the soldiers of the Principality of Wanheim, and also were Drag-Knights.

Leading the group of uniformed people was a man with a scar on his face.

They were different from the group of people they had met previously, as they exposed blatant hostility toward Lux "Really, if the New Kingdom's military must depend on these guys, seems like the New Kingdom is really in decline, how unsightly."

"....."

"....."

These male soldiers did not let the other party saved their face and continuously slandered Lux's group.

But, Dilwy, who was standing at the front, just turned his head down and endured them all.

(Sure enough, coming to the Principality of Wanheim we will have to certainly face such a thing.) Of course, it wasn't like the soldiers of the Principality of Wanheim did not have humility.

After all, Arcadia Empire in the past had conducted military interventions to its surrounding countries.

In reality, those were military invasions to the surrounding countries The older the bordering countries, the longer their royal and aristocrat families had faced the pressure from the Empire.

This a-hundred-plus years of struggles had left a deep scar. Even now there were still people bearing that grudge in mind.

Not to mention the Empire had just collapsed five years ago, renaming it to

New Kingdom basically did not solve this problem.

But it still didn't vindicate how these soldiers were unable to restrain their grudge and anger in this place.

"Tch....."

Faced with the oncoming heavy hostility, the girls were forced to move back.

The leader Dilwy had also turned away, unconfidently chose to avoid their sights.

"Hey hey, you guys aren't daring to even retort? You're calling yourself soldiers of the Old Empire like that?"

A man walked up and blocked their way.

In a blink of an eye, Lisha who were walking beside Lux also ran out of the group.

"——Hah, a group of dogs looking down on people. The Old Empire had soon collapsed and had no more relations with us. Still trying to find fault here, do you think doing that can erase your shame in the past?"

".....Tch, what did you say!?"

"You want to insult us? At most you guys just happened to win against our participated soldiers in the All-Dragon Battle, do not think that you can win against us——."

The Wanheim soldiers rebuked angrily.

However, Lisha did not waver even for a little, her red eye emitted sharp glint like sword, showing a confident smile while staring back at them.

"Boring. You guys obviously came here to pick a fight, the result is I say one word and you guys cannot refute? What else do you guys want?"

"Damn, since you said so"

An angry man went to Lisha.

In the moment this man was about to pull his Sword Device from his waist—— "This, it's best if you guys stop here?"

Lux immediately rushed in front of Lisha, his hand was also pushing back the sword hilt.

“Wha——!? You are.....!?”

Witnessing Lux’s quick but fluent movement, the man was a little shocked. Then after seeing Lux’s hair and eyes, he widened his eyes and said hysterically.

“Isn’t this a noble of the Old Empire who afraid of death? You dare to show up in front of my face!”

At this explosive moment, suddenly on the narrow road——

”——Everyone, stop here.”

Hearing the high pitched voice of a girl, everyone present stopped.

The two youths wearing the uniform of the Principality’s officer appeared on the road ”They are——“

“Long time no see, everyone from the New Kingdom.”

”A——.....so boring, why do I have to come with you.”

Smiling and saluting at them were the two teenagers who fought as the representatives of the Principality during the All-Dragon Battle.

One with a neutral appearance, with his hair tied to the back was the teenager, Coral.

Meanwhile, another with neat blond hair, with a hot-blooded face and sharp eye was the teenager, Greifer.



"I'm sorry, we are late. I would like to sincerely apologize for the offensive actions of our soldiers just now. I hope you guys can forgive them. We will punish them appropriately according to military regulations, please forgive us this time."

"Don't, don't joke with me!? We didn't do anything——"

The male soldier began to make excuses with a worried face.

"Stop wasting time, do you know how loud your voices were? We could even hear them clearly across the street, so the Princess told us to come and look at the situation."

"Uu....."

Hearing Greifer's rebuke, the face of these rugged male soldiers lost color one by one.

Then they immediately followed the staggering man with the scar and left.

"I'm sorry to have troubled you, everyone from the New Kingdom."

Seeing them leave, Coral bowed to Lux's group and apologized.

"No, we're fine, it's just that ——"

Lux replied, looking towards Greifer.

They had met a month ago, during the All-Dragon Battle held by the New Kingdom. He served as a Drag-Knight fighting as representative of the Principality of Wanheim so there were some connections between the two people.

Leaving the always friendly and helpful Coral aside, seeing Greifer, who had a grudge against the Old Empire, to help them was somewhat unexpected.

"Do not misunderstand, I have not yet accepted you. But it's a little bad to..... provoke the Princess's anger."

"Greifer actually really cares about Milmiette-sama."

"..... Coral, even if you are the princess's valet, don't think you can take a mile after been given an inch?"

Greifer whispered a warning with an unsatisfied look, while Coral, the pale

green hair teenager, was looking at Lux's group. It seemed that they had special positions even in this Principality of Wanheim.

"I'm sorry, but if you want to visit the facilities, then let us valets of Milmiettesama be your guide, what do you think?"

".....Ha!? We!? I didn't say I'll help!?"

"What are you waiting for Greifer? You still have to lead Lux."

Coral smiled reminding him, Greifer frowned.

Dilwy hesitated for a moment, before he finally accepted the proposal.

"Ok, for Lux-kun, actually there is a bit of another matter to attend, we will meet again later."

Finishing speaking, Coral gathered everyone else into a group.

"Wait, wait a minute!? Only the two of us?"

To be honest, because Greifer had always been harsh on Lux so he was trying to avoid him, looking around for help.

But Coral exposed a mischievous smile and moved his mouth near Lux's ear.

"It's alright, although he looks like that, Greifer has always taken good care of others."

Then, Coral took Dilwy and the rest away.

On this spacious road now were only two people, Lux and Greifer.

".....E, etou, because I do not know where to go, so..... sorry to bother you."

"Ha To be honest I really do not want to take this job, but it can't be helped since I'm on an errand."

Greifer went on without motivation and Lux followed behind after a short distance.

"....."

It was very awkward.

Although Lux had no relation in this, Greifer lost his father when he was little due to the Old Empire, so Lux basically did not know what to say.

They obviously were peers of same age, but Lux couldn't even find a topic of conversation.

"What are you afraid of? I can't believe this and the person who could fight against me last time is the same person."

Greifer as always with his proud attitude, continued to walk forward.

Looking from the dormitory, they were advancing to the center of the Ruin's Gear.

"... The, the Ruin's Gear's structures, are really interesting."

"What's so interesting about it? I feel it's just troublesome."

"A, I, I see.....So, look like you have a good relationship with Coral, you usually....."

"We are only together because of our job required us to move together. Our relationship is not really that good?"

"Is, is that so....."

This was hopeless, the conversation couldn't be started at all.

Because there was no proper conversation, it was leading to Lux feeling dejected—— "Hey! Have you now become silly? Don't fall down the stairs!"

"Uwa!? So, sorry!"

While walking up the stairs of the building, Greifer stared and roared at Lux.

(Sure enough, he hates me——huh?)

Raising his head and observing carefully, he spotted the handrails had many cracks, it seemed to be fragile.

(Is it, is it because it's dangerous that he warned me, right.....?)

Although Lux noticed this, but Greifer did not say anything else and kept moving forward.

"That, for warning me just now, thank you."

".....Let's make it clear first, I am not a wild dog that destroys things randomly! Furthermore, that time was my misunderstanding, plus I was the one

who picked the fight. At least in general, I did not specifically pick a fight with you.”

It seemed that Greifer didn’t particularly have high hostility toward Lux.

And like Coral said, he would take care of people.

Lux couldn’t help but felt relieved. Unknowingly, the Ruin’s Gear giant hemispherical palace appeared in front of his eyes, here was the destination.

”Here is ——?”

”Here is the gate to hell, well—some happy-go-lucky officials at the capital described this as ‘The Lid of the Treasure Chest’.”

“Here, is the gateway into the Ruin.....”

Although he had heard the rumors, but actually seeing it he was still nervous.

”In the upper part of the palace —— ‘Canopy’, there are the Central Square and City Hall. The underground is the second ruins ‘Dungeon’. However, the next place we’ll go to might not meet up to your expectations, we’re going to the upper part.”

As Greifer said, the center of the palace had a spiral staircase connected to the Canopy, but the way leading to the underground was in another way.

“Ok, although I just said I harbored no hostility toward you, but the next place we go to might not be the case.”

”E....?”

Greifer turned back and gave a meaningful caution, Lux was a bit confused.

“I will tell you the man who had summoned us here. ‘Blue Tyrant’ Singlen Shelbrit, he who presided over the “Seven Drag Paladins” will held a round table discussion here.”

”——!?”

Lux,after hearing the name, immediately tensed his body.

Without enough time to prepare himself, they had come to the front of the hall.

Because this place was on top of the ruin with Abyss, the hall was enclosed in several layers of stone walls

Part 3

Today, they were gathering in one of the rooms.

“Gentlemen, thank you for specially come here. First of all, at this moment we Seven Dragon Paladins’ can finally gather, I am very happy.”

A man holding a wineglass full of deep red wine, his unique deep voice resounded through the room.

“Why, are you here——”

Lux, who saw the man after just entering the room, asked cautiously.

It looked like this was just a small military conference room, the room had almost no decoration.

At the center table in the main seat, there was a man.

This man although he was short, but his words and gestures were especially sophisticated, his black eyes seemed bottomless.

He was wearing an eerie dark blue cloak, not even taken off his hood, but just sitting there with a smile.

He was the current Commander of Blackend Kingdom’s guards as well as “Seven Dragon Paladins” vice-captain, “Blue Tyrant” Singlen Shelbrit.

Beside him was someone who was even shorter——A platinum haired girl.

She was appointed a few days ago by Ymir Theocracy as one of the Drag-Knights of the “Seven Dragon Paladins”, Mel Gizalut This girl looked like a child from the outside, only her mouth was smiling with interest while looking at Lux.

“What’s wrong? Hurry up and sit down, did you get tired after climbing up the stair? Do not hesitate to take a break first, this great me allowed it.”



Singlen was buried deep in between his armchair, his whole body leaning back as he said that.

Sure enough he still showed his familiar slovenly look even at another country.

“I am standing because of reason, as I am prepared to leave immediately.”

Lux sighed, looking at him with weary eyes.

“Hey, why? Don’t you like the Princess-sama’s specially prepared rooms? What an arrogant guy. Can’t be helped, I better go ask them to change the room.”

“For what reason, did you specifically summon me, who am unrelated to the “Seven Dragon Paladins,” to participate in the discussion of the round table.”

Lux did not go along with Singlen’s joke, but asked indifferently.

However, the concerning person had a look as if nothing had happened; furthermore he revealed a faint smile and looked at Lux with a surprise expression.

“You are really forgetful, I told you, right? Because your country has not elected a ‘Seven Dragon Paladins’ candidate, so in the past I found a temporary substitute.”

“I remember I have refused on the spot. Have you forgotten?”

“Kukuku you really seem to hate this. Then I will first not treat you as a candidate. However, you still need to listen to this discussion and then decide the future path. So— —you first of all should just represent the New Kingdom, participate as a representative of the New Kingdom.”

”!?”

Lux exposed a surprise look, Singlen was showing a fearless smile.

“Chore Prince, quickly sit down. Or do you want to continue to waste time for all the guests here? We are all very busy. All of these happened are the fault of you guys for not electing a “Seven Dragon Paladins” candidate.”

Singlen indifferently warned, this again made Lux tensed up.

He was still insolently arrogant, and didn't show the slightest flaw.

Not only did he not compromise, but also use those sophistries to get the pace of the conversation into his hand's control.

Compared with those controlling New Kingdom who didn't have any abilities, dealing with the person in front of him was much harder.

"You just need to listen, at most it will take some time, please forgive me."

If he resisted, he was afraid that it would only lead to heavier blame. Lux could only honestly sit down.

Then Greifer sat down next to him, leaving three vacant seats.

"OK, we're all here, how about we first begin from self-introduction? My name is Singlen Shelbrit, I'm appointed by the World Agreement as the vice-captain of 'Seven Dragons Paladin', please take care of me."

"....."

"We all must have heard of the World Agreement? There are many complex articles regarding the investigations of the ruins. There are considerations of the Drag-Knight's strength in relation to their Abyss subjugation, then again according to their merits to determine their World Rank. Now that is to say, as the Vice-Captain, I rank second."

Lux, Greifer, as well as Mel Gizalut showed no reaction.

Then according to instructions Greifer introduced himself by simply saying his name. Then the turn of the young girl came.

"First time meeting you, I am the 'Seven Dragon Paladins' of Ymir Theocracy, Mel Gizalut, please take good care of me."

She was wearing a unique styled dress, with black and white colors like a lovely girl.

However, her big eyes were filled with determination and her breathing suggested that she was ready to fight at any moment.

"It's rare to see the 'Seven Dragon Paladins' sitting together in one room. Originally, I was looking forward to this, but now they seem pretty weak,

boring. Anyway, again, take care of me”

”.....”

Smiling innocently, Mel Gizalut finished her introduction. The room was quiet.

The air was filled with an inexplicable sense of tension, and finally it was Lux’s turn.

“I’m Lux Arcadia, and I am attending this meeting as a substitute, so I suppose I don’t need to speak.”

”Originally the Old Kingdom seventh Prince, now living in Cross Field City and enrolled in Cross Field’s Academy, the chore prince who is worked hard by the officer cadets who are noble girls.”

”A.....!?”

Lux had just sat down, Singlen sitting at the opposite immediately exposed his identity.

“Now is the lowest Drag-Knight, the Drag-Ride he is using “Wyvern”, fighting style is not attack, only special defense type, so getting the such a name as “Weakest Undefeated”, and —— oh yeah, If I continue I’m afraid it will cause problems, right?”

”Sir Singlen.”

Lux looked at him with cold eyes and protested, but Singlen did not pay attention to it.

”Huh? What is it? Don’t need to thank me, this level of supplement explanation is my job as the ‘Seven Dragon Paladins’ vice captain. You’re welcome.”

“..... If it’s all right, can you listen to my request? Because tomorrow I still have to attend the upgrade test, so I wanted to get back to the dormitory before midnight, please?”

Lux sighed, and changed his strategy.

After all, if he went head to head, there was no way to win.

So Lux decided to wait and find a way out.

“You’re really strong headed.....there’s no other way, let’s get started. I have sent messengers to the Kings of the countries and their sides have received the message, but I’ll say it again.”

Singlen paused for a moment, and then the conversation suddenly became serious.

”Dragon Marauders’, have any of you heard of this name?”

“.....‘Dragon Marauders’?”

Lux asked, Mel had a puzzled expression, Singlen nodded and said.

“Well, it’s the mercenary group that has been expanding aggressively in recent years. Drag-Ride mercenaries are not really that unusual. However, their real purpose is a big problem.”

“Uncle, your opening is too long. What are those sneaky guys prepared to do? Greifer rudely asked.

“They should be secretly plotting to overthrow our country.”

Singlen raised his mouth to answer immediately.

“Overthrow huh, so how will they do it?”

Mel wasn’t surprised, she asked while still maintaining an innocence look.

”As I said, the ‘Dragon Marauders’ is a Drag-Ride mercenary organization, as long as there is money, they will ambush on the battlefield, waiting for action. There are a lot of people who will hire them, such as rich families, rulers, politicians, and there are——arm dealers among countries that are hiring them.

”

Singlen looked meaningfully at Lux, and Lux remained silent.

He thought of Heiburg’s military adviser, Dark Merchant Hayes.

That girl who was supposedly had connection to the Ruin, she also had anything to do with the ‘Dragon Marauders’?

“But this is strange, the mercenary group behaving this way is commonplace? Why do we have to discuss it here?”

“In other words, in fact, this is also our fault, Greifer. You will often hear of this argument. Since the early discovery of the Drag-Ride treasure slumbered inside the ruin, the pioneers, who in order to monopolize these treasures, had agreed on a set of rules. The whole All-Dragon Battle system is also a big part of it. And for example, we from the Blackend Kingdom is very far away from this ruin; even if we have an exploring certificate, we can’t simply go in to explore. So we normally pay tolls to other countries to explore together to make up for this shortcoming. But this sooner or later will leave a gap, you dare say that this isn’t a possibility?”

“And, what you mean is——”

“Everyone wants the Drag-Ride slumbering within the ruins, but exploring the ruins will mean they will inevitably face the Abyss. Only strong Drag-Knights can have the ability to compete with the Abyss, and the right to explore is decided by competition between the Drag-Knights, in that case the strong countries will only become stronger and stronger, while the weak countries will be left behind farther and farther.”

Lux sensed the true implication in Singlen’s words.

Countries that had been lucky to get ahead developed the World Agreement in order to keep themselves in the first place.

However, unfortunate countries and people were placed under restriction.

Not only small countries without Ruin, even territories that have relics within great countries will have gap opened.

This separation would create under-the-table power struggles. One might look and thought it was calm like water surface, but underneath is a burning flame of disputes.

“Don’t you think this is very unreasonable? At most we don’t really need to care much, after all the people who are enjoying the benefit won’t think this is unreasonable, or pretend not to see it.”

“.....”

“As a result, they must face limited assets; those in power, politicians are afraid to lose their power. Once the military power gap becomes bigger, then

their rights and property may be taken away at any time so they are anxious. The mercenaries Drag-Knight spot this as a money-making opportunity, moreover some people will depend on them to break the balance, and they might even steal the Drag-Ride and treasures in the ruins.”

Singlen half mockingly laughed and then sighed.

He shook his glass, and slightly leant his body on the chair.

”Of course, as you also knew, there have been several rebellions in various countries. Therefore, the situation surrounding the Ruins is also unstable and very dangerous, and there might even be unexpected situations. The group of thieves might cause disaster in the ruins that is unprecedented in the past. We Blackend Kingdom also had a ‘disaster’ occurred, a new Abyss calls Nocturnal(Phantom Devilman).”

The ‘Disaster’ of Blackend Kingdom turned one-third of its territory into scorched earth.

It was the incident that became the impetus for the recall of Singlen who was once exiled by the royal family.

After that, although it had not yet been confirmed whether it was true or not, but compared with the Abyss in the past, the new Abyss’s strength was overwhelming—the matter of Nocturnal had also been heard in the academy.

“And then finally, it’s the turn of us the ‘Seven Dragon Paladins’, is that what you’re saying?”

Mel showed a bold smile, Singlen nodded.

Uniting the countries as well as strengthening combat capability, in order to oppose the threat of Ruins, and confronted the “Dragon Marauders”.

That was probably the reason the ‘Seven Dragon Paladins’ existed.

But——

”Surely the outside world thinks so, however, have you thought about the implication inside this? To the end which side is right? One side who does not distribute the benefits derived from the Ruins, and afraid of it being taken away by others, and monopolize everything, are the major powers, the pioneers,

royalties and nobles in the right in your view? Or the other side who cannot get the exclusive treasures, but can only use mercenaries to plunder those in power. Standing under different circumstances, can we dare to say that we are right?"

Singlen jokingly laughed at it all.

Greifer listened to his words, couldn't stand it and sighed.

"Haa.....So what are you trying to do? I'm just a mere Drag-Knight, I have no interests in what is good and bad.....And vice captain-sama, this kind of things are for the people above to judge isn't it? If you want to waste time, then I'll go back first."

Really worthy of Greifer, he was such a person.

He had an indifferent look, watching it all from the perspective of a calm bystander.

"So, what do you want to do as a representative of the country? Do you want to join hand with the 'Dragon Marauders' because Blackend Kingdom has no ruins?"

Then Mel Gizalut of Ymir Theocracy said contemptuously.

Only to see Singlen put down the glass and bent his mouth.

"——No, I will not allow helps on either side."

He whispered in a dim voice enough to shake the ear membrane.

Lux and three people exposed a look of astonishment, Singlen tapped his forehead with a finger.

"You didn't think about it? At the present, wars have been bogged down since a long time ago, ever since the discovery of ruins ten years ago, the scale of the war has also been suppressed. But this has not perfectly ended the war, so this 'Dragon Marauder' is the side-effect."

Singlen put his feet on the table like an uneducated child, a devil-like smile could be seen deep inside his hood, he looked at the three people one by one.

"The battle between two sides is inevitable, before the destruction of one of

them, I am afraid they will also spread to the citizen to intensify the struggle. In the past, my country had also fallen into disaster because of riots. So——Here, as the leaders of the countries are not present in this conference room, I have a proposal to tell you.”

- Bam!* Singlen put his Sword Device on the table and exposed a fierce look.

”Let the elite Drag-Knights of this world create a unified country. A new army leads by us ‘Seven Dragon Paladins’ to bring an end to this war, and also the governments of this world.”

”What.....!?”

Hearing these words, Lux was dumbfounded.

These words sounded impossible.

Singlen’s statement was clearly a rebellious incitement for them to oppose the government of each country.

”.....That doesn’t sound sane, what are you planning?”

Even the usual unconcerned Greifer looked at him in caution.

”I don’t think this is surprising, I just want to save my country. As I just said, once this mud-like battle intensified, then it is bounded to have huge casualties. Before the situation turn into this way, we rule this world by our own hands. It is a salvation in a way.”

Just like that, Singlen indifferently and confidently woven his words.

On one side the pioneer countries that got prioritized to explore the ruins, amassed a large number of Drag-Rides and Drag-Knights, and then at the other side was those who wanted to catch up but have no ruin inside their territories, and could only depend on the mercenary organizations.

If Singlen’s words were true, then his idea might not be mistaken necessarily.

”Well, it’s really noble. But, why should we even do that? No——it’s better to say how can you guarantee we could do it successfully?”

”To win over the public sentiment you will need a just cause, and people to

lead them. Evil foreign enemies and Abyss, if we can defeat these enemies that is threatening the existence of the common people, we can be seen as heroes. And the only people who can do this are us, elite Drag-Knights. We can then protect the people, conquer the lands, preserve the country existence. We can be way better than the backward system of long ruling aristocrats, this is my basis.”

”

After listening to Singlen’s reasoning, Mel shrugged.

She did not seem to accept this reason completely, however she also did not plan to refute.

But Lux didn’t relax his vigilance for a moment.

(So, what is the final goal of this man.....)

Lux didn’t feel that Singlen would do this because he was driven by a sense of justice.

No matter how to look about it, it all seemed like he was just inviting everyone to overthrow the existing regime.

——Well, what is he planning to do?

Even if it was really like Singlen said and there were bitter struggles over the ruins, there were surely other ways to avoid the struggle?

”If the three of you directly join my White Ridge Knights, I hope you will become the backbone of this new organization. Of course, you don’t take orders from the Blackend Kingdom, please rest assured about this. I do not intend to let you betray your motherland and form allegiance to the Blackend Kingdom. But we will treat your family well, servants and friends, we will pay you enough compensation.”

However, Lux ignored Singlen’s casual invitation, and asked with a serious look.

”——If this really becomes so, then what about those who can’t use Drag-Ride?”

”The talentless is obliged to serve the genius.....Finally it will become so. But

it will be based on that person's ability to grant him the appropriate power, we will set up a variety of qualifications or something. Like today Ruin's Gear organized class upgrade test——”

Singlen replied smoothly.

Lux took a deep breath and stared at Singlen with cold eyes.

“Then, I'll pretend to not hear anything.”

“Gosh? Are you angry? Or——Because you want to accuse me of looking down on the weak? I cannot think how you turned out to be the royal family of the Old Empire of Arcadia.”

“Because your idea is too contradictory, you mock the folly of two sides fighting, but you create a new system only benefits the strong Drag-Knight, so you only treat it differently.”

Lux stood up straight, and walked directly to the door.

Before he could reach it, Singlen sighed.

“Is this a story that is too early for a kid to listen to? There is no equality in the world, if you think your country is now equal, it can only show that your eyes are clouded. And then currently, we are fighting battles with our life on the line, but we are in a position where sooner or later we will used up for all of our worth before getting thrown away. You're a strange man, Chore Prince. While you're standing in an unfair position where you yourself got hurt and made to take the brunt of everything, but you accepted it and did not even complain about the treatment you received. Are you born with servile personality seeping to your bone, or perhaps——”

“.....”

Listening to Singlen's rebuke, Lux suddenly stopped.

“But see, don't avert your eyes. Don't assume that your own choice is always correct. You're your hard work to try to save others sometimes will also cause distress to someone else. Just like by you helping the New Kingdom to carry out exploring the ruins, and defeat the Abyss Ragnarok, the result is that it makes people of your country and foreigner fear how dangerous you are. Yeah, I

understand. You are doing that much of a feat of valor, but still idiotically insist on continuing being a sinner, your reason for doing that is ultimately——“

”-.....!?”

His heart was in pain as if being stabbed by a needle, which made Lux couldn't help but feel uncomfortable.

Lux suddenly had an inexplicable impulse, just when he wanted to open his mouth to rebuff——

- Duang!*

At this time, the bell rang vigorously. The bell rang through the city hall, including the center of the Ruin's Gear.

This tone and the alarm were different.

It was to inform people it was night time.

”.....So we have already talked this long. There are still you two? Greifer Nest and Mel Gizalut, what do you think?

“You think I would have the slightest interest in this nonsense?”

In the face of Singlen's inquiry, Greifer rudely rejected.

”E~I think it's interesting?”

Unlike him, Mel's voice was very happy, but half way her words became dim.

“But——I do not want to join under you wings. If you let me be the leader, then I'd consider?”

Mel stared at Singlen with her dreary gaze.

Worthy of being the elite Drag-Knights who had gone through many selections to represent their own country, everyone seemed to have their own plans.

”Whew, you're really an annoying group. Forget it, if later we have a chance we'll talk about it again. I hope next time you can give me an answer that will satisfy me.”

Singlen took out his pocket watch before he slowly stood up and said that.

”.....I’ll leave first.”

Then, closest from the door Lux walked out of the room.

Although he didn’t deliberately look back, but he could also feel that someone was following after him.

”It actually dragged on for so long, if we go back at this time Coral must be very anxious.”

Said Greifer as he casually walking next to him.

He didn’t touch the content of the meeting, was it because of him being considerate? But Lux did not say anything.

Even if he reported Singlen’s speech to the top-levels, it seemed there would be of no use.

After all, he might have already discussed in advance with the leaders of other countries, saying he just wanted to “test their loyalty.”

(Rather than that, I, just what am——)

Regarding of what Singlen had said just now, the reason Lux was still continuing to stay as criminal.

Although the consuls in the capital told him that they would free him from the shackles of being criminal, Lux didn’t take their offer. Did he do that really only to avoid getting used by them?

Walking down the long stairs, they finally left the upper part of the palace ——“Canopy”

In front of them appeared the door to the second ruin “Dungeon”, its structure was like an ant nest.

Part 4

".....Err, why is there no room for me?"

Lux went directly back to the dormitory, after eating dinner.

In order to prepare for tomorrow's test, he was originally scheduled to sleep in this dormitory today, but there happened to be a small problem.

For the Class promotion exam this time, there were rooms prepared for Dilwy, the New Kingdom soldiers, and the female students.

But all the rooms were full, and there was no extra room for Lux to stay.

"I'm sorry, Lux-kun. I thought it would not be a problem for you and Phi to sleep in the same room."

"Here's a foreign country, I beg you not to not give us special treatment even here, alright!?"

It seemed Relie originally intended to let Lux and Philluffy share a room, but she got warned by the dormitory administrator, and of course it couldn't be accommodated.

"Okay, there is an empty bed in my room, why don't you comes sleep there?"

Coral who happened to pass by heard their conversation on the first floor of the dormitory and proposed that.

Lux did not hesitate to agree, and finally decided to stay in his room for one night.

"Thank you very much, you're a big help."

Lux took the luggage and followed Coral in the hallway.

"You're welcome. I'm guessing from the headmaster's words before, Lux, do you sleep together with that girl at the New Kingdom's Academy?"

"Of, of course not!? I certainly sleep alone!"

Lux couldn't say that not long ago he was still sleeping with Philuffy. Coral showed a wry smile.

It appeared that this guy was very friendly and liked to joke.

"Ahaha, but Lux-kun seems to have a very good relationship with them. Even though you're a prince of the old empire——"

"....."

Coral casually uttered a sentence, but it made Lux to become silence.

"Ah, sorry, did I say anything strange?"

Coral took notice of his reaction and hurriedly apologized.

"No, don't mind it, I'm just feeling relieved."

Lux answered with a stiff smile.

In fact, Coral's unintentional words really touched Lux's heart.

No, since coming to the Principality of Wanheim that was still hostile to the Old Empire, or to be more precise ever since meeting the man in the academy ——Singlen, Lux had been worried about something (Is it really okay for me to stay like this?)

Meeting with Lisha and the other girls at the academy, Lux got a new place to belong.

He would become the shield for the girls that were the New Kingdom pillars, and become their strength.

This was the worth of Lux's life now, and also his purpose of living.

Originally, that should be the case ——

"Well, I'm going to greet Milmiette-sama, you can rest in the room first."

"A, yes, thank you."

Lux gently waved farewell to Coral walking out of the room, and then relaxingly sighed.

Here was a foreign military dormitory, a person staying here would still be

very tense, fortunately however, he shared the same room with acquaintance Coral, this made him felt relieved.

”Living in the city just above a Ruin.....always can’t be at ease.”

Lux sat on a side-by-side bed by himself.

Cross Field that was acting as a defense point against Ruin also had the same danger level like this place, but he was still slightly concerned.

Although he thought of this, but right now it had been a long time since he didn’t have to worry about doing chore. Lux decided to take a deep rest.

Lux crossed his hand and stretched over his head, it felt like his shoulders were a little stiff.

”Please feel at ease, master. Even if the Abyss or the Principality of Wanheim attacks, I will defend you.”

”.....I am relieved to hear you said so. But surely there will be no problem.”

He felt there was someone with comfortable strength excellently massaging his shoulders.

In this extremely comfortable feeling, his spirit gradually relaxed, then Lux suddenly reflected—— ”.....E, eeeeh!?”

Surprised, Lux reflexively jumped out of the bed.

Sitting behind him was a girl wearing an exotic dress——Kirihime Yoruka
”Wait a bit!? Why!? How come——!?”

It shouldn’t be possible for her to be here, Lux’s brain instantly went blank.

”Ara? It was a long way from the Cross Field City to here, I think master must have stiff shoulders, right?”

”I’m not talking about that!? My shoulders are not important! Compared to that, how did you get here——?”

Yoruka had not officially completed the admission process.

So she couldn’t be accepted in the Class promotion exam. It should not be possible for her participate in this expedition.

No, not only that, originally to enter the Principality of Wanheim, there must be a lot of procedures to handle.

Thinking so Lux looked uneasily at Yoruka, she smiled brightly to give her master peace in mind.

“Please feel at ease, I smuggled in.”

“This is the worst answer!? What would you do if you were found!?”

Although he wasn’t sure of the law of the Principality of Wanheim, but it would be no doubt that she would go to jail.

Of course, incidentally, the New Kingdom would be dragged into the trouble.

“Master, your concern is uncalled for. No one noticed along the way, and if I were discovered, I’m going to shut them up.”

Yoruka indifferently declared, Lux felt a little dizzy.

Although they agreed that she couldn’t kill anymore, but she was a born-assassin.

It would only be a headache if he tried to get to the bottom of this, but he couldn’t just let Yoruka wander around freely like that.

After all, he had rescued her and made her as his courtiers, so she was his own responsibility.

“That, Yoruka.....since you’ve come here, there’s no other way, but I hope while you’re here try not to be found, can you do that?”

“I understand. Then let me hide in this closet, or the bed is also OK.”

“I beg you, find a place outside of this room to hide!”

“You are really nervous master, and this is the enemy’s place, if I cannot be ready to serve master at anytime, then I would not be able to do the work of a follower.”

“No, this country for better or worse has at least signed the World Agreement.....”

””But——it seemed to me something is wrong.”

"E.....?"

Suddenly Yoruka's tone was lowered by eight degrees, and a glamorous smile appeared.

Then she sat on the bedside, brought her face rapidly toward Lux.

"Master seems have been on guard ever since he came to this country."

It was a transparent purple eye.

In this pair of eyes, that had accepted Hayes "baptism" and won the devils power, Lux's face was reflected.

He was afraid, that this pair of eyes could see through every corner of Lux's heart.

"It's nothing, you think too much, I was just wondering what has happened before in this country, what did the Old Empire had done here, I just feel a bit concerned about these things——"

Yoruka nodded quietly, listening to Lux's voice.

".....About a dozen years ago, the royal family of the Arcadia Empire invaded this land. Their justification to foreign countries was only to compete for territorial's rights, but as for the truth it was not known, however——"

Yoruka paused, then continued.

"Greifer Nest. I remember that his father sold information to the Old Empire, which determined the victory and defeat of this war, at least that is what I've heard. Of course, this is only the story from the Old Empire's side."

"....."

The thief who sold intelligence to the Old Empire was his father.

Whether this was true or not, this must be fate between Greifer and the New Kingdom.

"I only heard of these. Then, I will leave the room without leaving any traces, but please let me be able to respond immediately and stay within the scope of master's call."

"Well, so be it. But, this time as long as I don't order, you are not allowed to

interfere with anything no matter who.”

”I understand, master.”

Yoruka gave a warm smile and opened the door quietly, then disappeared into the dark corridor.

Her movements were so natural that it brought surprises, at most it seemed to come from her own special intuitions, she should be aware that the other people couldn’t do it.

”Fuu…….”

Finally able to breath, Lux directly laid down on the bed.

There was no helping thinking about the past.

Lux knew that wanting to cut off his connection to the Old Empire that even he did not completely understand is very foolish.

(But——)

Airi seemed somewhat strange.

The code of Over Limit that he became unable to remember..

Then, the ambition to let the Drag-Knights establishing a new system of domination, “Seven Dragon Paladins” vice captain, Singlen Shelbrit.

Originally he was looking forward to the Class promotion exam in this country, but it looked like there were some unrests hiding behind a hazy layer of fog.

Episode 3 – Class Promotion Exam

Part 1

Those three people were looking down on the ground from the sky.

Light that was faint like a candle but which wasn't from flame was illuminating the cold space.

Light images that were like countless small windows were projected on a wall surface inside that unique room.

Four males and females with varying figures were there.

「Is that so..... So Hayes didn't wait for my awakening.」

A silver haired girl wearing a shining dress. as though it was inlaid with gems, was whispering so inside the darkness.

There was a huge transparent pillar in front of the girl. That pillar was filled inside with water that was shining bluish white. A naked girl was floating inside the water.

The girl that had the same silver colored hair as her was hanging her head down. Her body wasn't even twitching as though she was dead.

When the girl in a dress let out a lamenting sigh, a tall man kneeled in front of her.

「The responsibility lies with me who was unable to protect her highness the third imperial princess. Please give me any punishment that you deem fit.」

「I heard the details from Mishis. The fault doesn't lie with you. After all, that girl, since the past she wouldn't listen to anyone when she had set her heart on

something.」

The girl in a dress muttered apathetically as though she wasn't despondent at all.

Then, the blue haired maid standing by at the back—Mishis vi Exfer lifted her face.

「Her highness the second imperial princess has already blended in as a close aide of a certain country. She told me that when Listelka-sama woke up, she wished that you would contact her through me.」

「Is that so, well, surely Aeryl has some kind of thinking. Among us, that girl is a bit peculiar, but her ideal should be fundamentally the same as us.」

After saying only that, she stood in front of the kneeling man and gently presented her hand.

And then, while her long hair that was dangling until almost reaching the floor swayed, she whispered calmly.

「Please lift up your face Fugil. I am different from Hayes, I wish to borrow your strength. Will you help me, the priestess of oracle?」

「As your will wishes it, your highness.」

Fugil smiled fearlessly while bowing. He then took her hand.

Listelka gazed at that affectionately while smiling.

「Thank you. And then, let us take back our country together. You who prevented the betrayal towards us the LordCreator and destroyed that clan, saving us, my —hero」

With that word as the last, the inside of the room was filled with silence.

Only the quiet sound of the Ruins working could be heard for a while in that place.

Part 2

「Nn, nn.....」

Lux could hear the chirping of small birds.

Warm sunlight was shining in through the room's old curtain.

The morning in the land of a foreign country was just a bit warmer than usual and invited sleepiness, even so a voice from the side awakened Lux's consciousness.

「Good morning Lux-kun. Was the bed here hard?」

Coral who already woke up in the neighboring bed was wearing short underclothes similar to Lux. For an instant Lux felt his heart throb seeing that slender body and androgynous face.

「N, no. I slept well, thank you.」

Lux felt embarrassed when he thought whether his sleeping face was seen. He immediately averted his face while replying back.

「I'm glad. By the way, coffee or tea, which one do you prefer?」

Coral smiled and asked him that with a friendly tone.

When Lux answered tea, Coral went to the service room and he brought back cups for two people.

「It has been a long time since someone brewed tea for me in the morning.」

Lux muttered while quietly sipping the tea.

「Is that so? As I thought, that's —Lux-kun is the one usually brewing it, because of your work then?」

Coral was asking in a bit of a roundabout way, perhaps because he was avoiding from mentioning the nickname Chore Prince.

Lux smiled wryly at Coral's friendly consideration and he nodded.

「I didn't do that kind of work that many times, but I like a chore where I can brew tea. When the result comes out good, for some reason it feels good.」

「Aa, that feeling. I also understand it. There is only a slight difference, but you can understand right away from the taste and aroma—」

Like that, Lux and Coral had fun talking with each other about trivial daily things.

But, the bell that informed them to wake up immediately rang inside the building and they decided to head to the dining hall in order to have breakfast.

「Ah, sorry. Even though you have the exam today, I took your time to prepare.」

「No. Thanks to you I could relax.」

Lux was changing uniforms on the spot while replying smilingly.

Lux was worried last night about the matter of Yoruka, but it seemed it was the correct choice for him to receive a favor from Coral.

After he was showed the way until the dining hall, Lux parted from Coral for the moment and he joined up with everyone from the Academy.

The content of the meal was substantial to some degree, but as expected it was inferior when compared to the meals at the AcademyRoyal Officer Academy.

(Without realizing it my tongue has also become used to luxury huh.....)

Lux was thinking about such things while finishing his meal, then the Triad and Airi came before Lux.

「Morning Lux-chi! Were you lonely last night staying alone? You can come to our room to play you know?」

「Good morning Tillfur. That's, I'll just accept your feeling gratefully.」

After Lux smiled awkwardly, the another member of the Triad, Sharis smiled at him.

「Fufu, Lux-kun is also the same as usual huh. —That's what I want to say, but

that absentminded face isn't like the usual you, you know?」

「Yes. As expected, Lux-san seemed to be worried about Airi. I should have visited to report that she is safe.」

「Thi, this is unrelated with me. Geez.....」

Airi who suddenly had the talk directed at her pouted shyly.

It seemed that although they had nervousness before the exam, but these girls were still the same as usual.

「Everyone is different from me, you all don't look nervous.」

「Is that how we look like? Then, my acting skills must have gone up.」

Sharis suddenly smiled and folded her arms after hearing Lux's words.

‘Eh.....?’ When Lux observed the Triad really carefully, Tillfur was vaguely looking fidgety, Noct too looked like usual at a glance, but her expression was a bit stiff.

Furthermore even Sharis who looked composed at a glance also said such things, so she must be really nervous too.

「We are Middle Class right now, so going up from here is gonna be really difficult right—」

「Well, as SyvallesKnight Order too, we are going to lose face if we keep relying on you all the time. Today we are going to do our best—to show result.」

At the end Sharis concluded beautifully like that befitting her status as the leader of the Triad.

「It will be fine. Everyone's strength has been growing up rapidly after all.」

When Lux said that to reassure the three, Airi sighed in exasperation.

「What is Nii-san saying when you are still at Low Class yourself? Surely there won't be any problem with Nii-san's practical skill, but if you fail the written test then it's hopeless you know?」

「Uh!?!」

Lux flinched from the sharp retort and without pause Airi sidled up on Lux.

「I'm sincerely telling you Nii-san, please don't do anything that will make you really stand out. After all, this country is a place that has discord with the Old Empire.」

「Right. I understand that.」

「Also, I'm not asking you to force yourself..... But—」

Airi muttered silently and brought her mouth close to Lux's ear. She then whispered to him.

「If possible, please pay attention to everyone else. After all, this seems to be their first promotion exam in a foreign country. They too are a bit nervous.」

「Right. I understand.」

Lux immediately gave that response before he suddenly made a smile.

「Even so, it looks like Airi too has returned to usual.....I'm a bit relieved.」

「Wha, what are you saying? I'm worried whether Nii-san will do something unneeded and stand out—」

「Sorry to always worry you. But, I'm really thankful.」

「If Nii-san thinks that, then please reflect a bit.....」

Airi said that with a small voice and she looked down with her cheeks slightly reddening.

Like that he parted from the Triad and Airi and moved to the designated place outside.

「Well then, from here we are going to move to the written examination venue. Is everyone's preparation all right?」

Everyone gathered towards the corridor from instructor Raigree's brief words.

Lux also opened the instruction manual for the Drag-Ride and did his last review.

At present, Lux's position was Low Class, but the exam question for promotion to Middle Class wasn't that difficult.

Although the difficulty level was different in proportion to the Class, the

program of this time's overall exam was something like this in general: The first exam – the written exam, related to the knowledge of things like a Drag-Ride's operating procedure, functions, and so on.

The second exam – an exam of basic physical strength, from hand-to-hand combat, as well as sword fighting skills and unarmed fighting skills.

The third exam – the exam of practical skills in operating a Drag-Ride, regarding the basic operation and the practical application of the general purpose Drag-Ride the examinee used.

The fourth exam – the exam of combat practical skills, testing through mock battle the examinee's tactic and battle strength assuming they were facing against an AbyssPhantom Divine Beast.

And then—, the scores from the first until the fourth exams would be judged comprehensively, depending on the situation it was also possible for a supplemental exam to be carried out.

Currently, among his close acquaintances, Celis was High Class, while Lisha, Krulcifer, Philuffy, Sharis, Tillfur and Noct were all Middle Class.

Counting out the girls of the raid squad Syvalles, the female students who were participating this time were mostly in the Beginner Class, the lowest kind of license, so first they would aim to be promoted to Low Class.

Regarding this time's first exam—the written exam, Lux was able to finish filling in the answers safely without any particular problem.

「Fuu.....」

He let out his breath and for the time being he was going to exit the venue, it was then—

「Hahah, you sure look composed, but it will be the practical skill exams at the afternoon. There is not only piloting tests, but there will even be a test in the form of real combat. I don't know when the pretension of you guys will get peeled off, but I'm looking forward to the bout y'know?」

The moment Lux exited from the hall of the exam venue, a man came. It was the man with a scar on his face who previously came picking trouble with Lux

and the others.

A military officer of the Vanheim Principality—a man called Buzzheim said such things to them with a disgusting smile.

It was a transparent threat, but several of the girls were trembling seeing that.

「-.....」

Lux hesitated whether he should make a rebuttal, but his thoughts halted just before he could say anything.

Quarreling within the New Kingdom's territory was also troublesome, but right now they were in the territory of a foreign country which could be even more troublesome.

This kind of thing caused one's feelings to go bad, but they must not get provoked by something of this level.

「Don't worry. They too have their own official position, they won't be able to meddle with us that openly.」

Suddenly Krulcifer stood beside Lux while coolly brushing up her hair.

「But—」

Lux uneasily raised his voice like that, but Krulcifer's face was serious.

「From here on, those girls can only bet on their own efforts. It's not something that you need to be responsible for until that far.」

「I.....guess.」

「But, if it bothers you that much, then there is something that you can do.」

「Eh.....?」

「If the weakest you—you whose true strength is by all rights nearly the strongest is taking the exam for the Low Class, then depending on how you do it, you should be able to become the strength of those girls. Then, let's meet again later.」

Krulcifer only said that before she slowly left.

An examiner passed her on the way and entered inside. When the break was over, the examiner told them to prepare for the next exam.

Lux was thinking of Krulcifer's words while following behind the military officers of the Vaheim Principality. He changed into his pilot suit in another room.

He did light warm-ups before exiting the room, then the time immediately arrived.

「—Then, the exam for the basic stamina as well as the practical skill of hand-to-hand combat will begin now!」

The man of the Vanheim Principality who was the examiner raised his voice and announced that.

The exam of basic stamina was running through designated distances with the objective to clear each distance within the allocated time.

This time they would run through the road at the outer circumference of Ruin's Gear.

Lux also felt it when he received the exam in the New Kingdom in the past, but he thought that it was a harsh exam for a girl.

「Haa, the distance is still all right, but just why is the road this bad—」

Those who could complain like Tillfur were still fine, but the majority of the girls were suffering from the steep slope of Ruin's Gear that they weren't used to.

「This is really pitiful. It's because there are no decent men in the New Kingdom that weak children and women like all of you has to have a hard time of it.」

「How about you all stop forcing yourself and go back home? Or should I carry you on my back with my hand on your ass?」

Amidst that running, three men running along the girls were making fun of the New Kingdom's girls who were gasping for breath.

The faces of the three men were the same as the soldiers from yesterday. The men who were observing what was happening from far away also had familiar

faces.

This must be the instructions from the scarred man with an examiner tag on his chest, Buzzheim.

These men wanted to clear up their resentment from the discord against the Old Empire in the past by venting it on the New Kingdom.

Lux tensed his expression and wracked his brain for a plan to stop that, it was then, 「You three are really composed isn't it?」

「Wha.....!」

A dignified expression without any opening in it, and an aloof presence that overpowered other people.

The existence of the girl who completely changed even the surrounding air caused the men to hold their breaths.

Celis, who was a part of the Four Great Nobles cut in between the men.

「If you three have that much confidence, how about having a match with me?」

The calm but vaguely overpowering tone provoked the three men.

「What are, you saying? This is an individual exam you know? It's not a place to start any unnecessary matches.」

The man's attitude suddenly changed. Perhaps Celis's fame was known even in the Vanheim Principality.

「Then, if you three can win against me in this competition, I'll listen to anything you say before our return home, how about it?」

「What-.....!?!」

But, the words that Celis said caused the men to turn stiff for a moment. They looked at each other's faces.

Next their gazes crawled on Celis's face and breasts—and continued further to around her hips that were wrapped in a pilot suit. Before long a gulping sound could be heard.

「.....As a noble of the New Kingdom, there is no going back on those words

right?」

The men licked their lips without even trying to hide their vulgar desires.

「But of course. Although, that's only if you three win against me.」

「Hahah! Don't regret that later-!」

The three men only said that before they suddenly raised their pace and ran ahead.

Until just now they were purposefully slowing down in order to harass the girls.

Celis who was receiving an exam to be promoted to EX Class was starting from quite far away behind the other examinees. The distance she needed to travel was long.

Since her childhood, as the heiress of the Ralgris house, Celis trained herself severely, but there was no absolute guarantee that she would be able to win.

「Celis-senpai.....」

When Lux called out uneasily, Celis smiled confidently.

「Please rest assured Lux. I won't lose against them.」

She told him as though it was only natural, as if she wasn't even pressured.

「Yes. But—will you allow me to help a little too?」

Lux thought of her existence as reliable, at the same time he also thought of an idea.

A way to oppose the harassment that was sent by that man called Buzzheim.

When he told his suggestion with a low voice, Celis immediately agreed with it.

「Understood. I'll rely on you, Lux.」

Celis accelerated her pace right away along with a calm smile.

She immediately overtook the three men running at the front and in the blink of an eye her figure disappeared from view.

「Everyone, don't worry about the rest.」

Lux said that to the girls who were menaced and he too increased his pace gradually so that he was starting to catch up with the back of Celis and the three men.

And then—he began his tactic.

「Hahaha, that stupid noble girl. Just as planned, she got angry and came opposing us.」

The three military officers who came harassing the girls—the men who were moving following Buzzheim's instructions, one of them uttered those words and made a vulgar grin.

It was unexpected that the other side was the one that came proposing a match, but seeing Celis running in a high pace was a happy miscalculation for the men.

These three knew very well the environment of the running course around Ruin's Gear.

The road surface at the latter half would be a steep slope with neglected stone paving. That course would double one's exhaustion.

It didn't matter that she was a trained military officer cadet, her stamina should be unable to hold out and she would self-destruct there.

But, even after the men continued to run and finished climbing the long slope, they weren't able to catch up with that back at all.

「Chih. Are we going easy too much? Let's hurry up a bit.」

The men who were impatient with the situation that deviated from their expectations accelerated right away at the descending slope.

But, the distance was only shrinking slightly.

「Why, why aren't we catching up!? — you bastard!？」

They continued to run until their breathing turned rough, even so Celis's back was far away.

Furthermore Lux who looked tired with his head hanging down was running

parallel to them, so the men's complexion changed.

「—Kuh! Don't underestimate us! We have been running through this path everyday all this time!」

The men raised a spirited yell and raised their pace even further.

At that moment, the match's outcome was completely decided.

「Guu, haa, haA.....u, Ah.....」

The men involved in the match were sitting down hard on the ground with gasping breaths.

Naturally they were unable to win the 『competition』 against Celis. Their own pace got messed up, they self-destructed, and they ended up nearly at the last place in the exam.

In the end, the plan that they executed didn't work against Celis and they were struck by a trap instead.

Celis was normally running by her own initiative on the path that wasn't paved, separately from the general exercises.

Therefore, she was mostly untroubled even when running on an unstable path that she wasn't familiar with.

In addition, was how Lux who looked knackered at a glance was running parallel beside the three men.

Those three became impatient seeing Lux, who looked exhausted, was running beside them, and so they raised their pace further.

「You helped me Lux. As expected from the grandson of Wade-sensei.」

「No, I was just getting on Celis-senpai's tactic.」

As expected, Lux wasn't a match against Celis who was talking without a single disorder in her breathing, but at the end he managed to reach the goal at a top ranking, so Lux thought that he too had run quite much in his own limitations.

Lux wiped his sweat and took a rest there while letting out a relieved sigh, it

was then, 「I heard the rumor but—the two of you are amazing.」

「—Eh?」

Suddenly the strained atmosphere was gently dispelled.

A girl with an appearance that was out of place in this exam was standing right behind him.

She was wearing a luxurious pure white dress, that was decorated with ornaments that looked like flower petals of many colors piled up on each other.

On top of her blonde hair with a trace of brown that was partly tied with a ribbon, there was a small golden tiara decorating her head.

That beautiful face was filled with a gentle smile.

「Ah, my apologies for my belayed introduction. I am Milmiette Crhodel. The Princess of this Vanheim Principality.」

Right after she introduced herself like that, Celis and Lux knelt almost at the same time.

A moment later, the officers around the venue also took saluting gesture in panic.

「Forgive our rudeness of not noticing the arrival of your highness.」

Even Raigree who was a slight distance away also saluted, but Milmiette shook her head slightly with a smile still on her face.

「Please be at ease. All of you are our sworn friends who have expressly made your way until this land. I'm only intruding here suddenly merely because of my curiosity.」

After Milmiette said that with a smile, everyone there silently stood up.

Then, the princess talked to Lux and Celis once more.

「Today the Class Promotion Exam is being held in this Ruin's Gear, and so I too have the privilege of observing it, but I was surprised by the ability of the two of you. I'll pray so that everyone of the New Kingdom will receive encouragement, and so that the officers of our country will also put in even more zeal into their training.」

「Yes, it's an honor to be granted your highness's praise.」

Lux was lured by Celis's words and he also lightly bowed his head.

Buzzheim who was standing at a slight distance away was gritting his teeth seeing that scene.

「I see', Lux thought.

Here Lux finally guessed the reason why a part of Vanheim's officers and the examiner called Buzzheim were losing their temper.

Originally they were roused up already with the visit of their country's princess to observe the exam, then in addition the exam became shaped like a competition against the country that was formerly their bitter enemy. It explained why their reaction was outspoken like that.

「Well then, now I'll leave to meet with my knight, so excuse me for the present. May luck be with you, everyone of the New Kingdom.」

The princess said only that before leaving with elegant footsteps.

After that, her bodyguards and servants who came late followed after her in a rush.

「She is a person with quite an unique atmosphere, isn't she?」

Celis whispered with a smile after the princess's presence left completely.

Lux was also in agreement in regards to that.

He thought that if it was the royalty of the Vanheim Principality, they too, would be harboring bad impressions towards the New Kingdom without a doubt, but unexpectedly it didn't seem so.

(By any chance, it could be that the advocates of her highness and the supporters of Buzzheim are split from each other.) While he was thinking such things, his back was suddenly tapped from behind.

「Looks like you were doing something quite fun huh, Lux.」

「Ah, Lisha-sama. Everyone too, thanks for your hard work.」

After the princess left, Lisha, Krulcifer, and Philuffy, the three who were at another place also came before Lux.

「You suddenly have attention showered on you. Well, for a person with a position like you, it will be even stranger if that's not the case though.」

「Running with the two of you, unfair. I also want to run with Lu-chan.」

「Ahaha.....」

Lux smiled wryly hearing Krulcifer and Philuffy's words.

Thinking that it would stand out too much if he was grouped with the users of Divine Drag-Rides, he was deliberately avoiding to approach the girls, but in the end he became completely involved with Celis.

「I'm sorry. This is my fault. I was relying completely on you again, what a blunder.」

Celis muttered with a slightly awkward look. In response to that Lux shook his head in a panic.

「That's not true. Thanks to Celis-senpai, those girl were also saved, besides, senpai was really cool.」

When Lux honestly conveyed his feelings like that, Celis's cheek flashed red.

「I, it really helps that you are saying that. After all, with myself alone I'm not confident, whether what I'm doing is really correct or not.....」

She spoke bashfully while averting her face a bit.

Lux who saw that was going to smile wryly, it was at that timing,

「Both of you, this isn't the place to flirt!」

Lisha cut in with a flustered tone.

「Tha, that was rude of me. We are still in the middle of the exam. We must not lose focus here.」

「Yes, certainly that's true. After all it seems that they too are feeling even stronger rivalry towards us.」

Lux and the others ran their gazes to their surroundings after hearing Krulcifer's words.

Buzzheim who was observing their way from afar had approached until right

in front of them unnoticed.

Those sharp eyes that were like a beast were boiling with hostility towards the New Kingdom.

「You guys are really composed huh? No, perhaps it's more accurate to call it being overly conceited.」

He snorted scornfully at Lux and the others while he kept walking to pass by them.

When they were passing each other, he came to a stop and twisted only his neck, directing a grin at Lux.

「Don't push your luck just from passing the basic stamina exam. You all after all are nothing more than remnants of the Old Empire.」

Buzzheim spat off those words before going towards the next venue together with his hanger-ons.

It was something expected already, but it seemed that man didn't plan to back away just with this.

Next would be the second exam's second part, an exam of unarmed fighting skill and sword fighting skill that would be carried out continuously.

They had heard from Raigree that in any kind of country, there was an inclination for men to have superior skills in unarmed fighting and sword fighting.

「Will everyone be okay in the next exam.....?」

「No matter how disadvantageous a battle it is, it's still too early to give up winning against them you know?」

In response to Lux's muttering, Krulcifer told him that with a suggestive expression.

Part 3

「Then, continuing the second exam of sword skills as well as unarmed fighting skills will begin. Form a line following the order you are called!」

At the next exam, the officers of the Vanheim Principality were really high spirited, forcing the girls of the Academy into a hard battle conversely.

In order to avoid injury, the exam was basically examinees having a practice match against each other to see who could hit the other following the proper stance, but as expected there was differences in pure physical strength between males and females, so the Academy students were falling behind.

It wasn't a subject that was considered as that important as a Drag-Knight, but on the whole, the New Kingdom was being pushed back.

「Now then, I too have to go all out as a member of Syvalles.」

When the turn of Sharis of the Triad came, a brawny man was waiting as her opponent.

Normally, the opponent should have a body build and gender that were as close as possible to the examinee, but it seemed that this was Buzzheim's instigation at work.

「I believe that my opponent is obviously different, but it's a painful thing to be unable to assert that I'm a woman at this kind of time.」

Sharis sweated and made a bitter smile. Almost at the same time the large man mercilessly attacked.

It was an exam to see how much the examinee could get the better of the opponent using martial art and a wooden sword in place of Sword Devices, but in order to avoid injury, a special regulation to not use direct attacks as much as possible was created.

「DROP DEAD YOU BRATTtTtT-!」

Sharis evaded the attack of the large man that was aiming at her shoulder and swept away the opponent's leg.

「Should I say that it was a blessing that I was usually defeated utterly by Celis? I won't be defeated by mere brute strength you know?」

Right after the man tumbled, Sharis quickly thrust the tip of her wooden sword on his chin.

With that stance, according to the rule the match was concluded—was how it supposed to be. But,

「That's naïve, girl.」

「Wha-.....!?」

Instantly, the leg of Sharis that was moved into the stance for the winning condition—was swept. By the foot of the man collapsing on the ground.

Sharis was reeled and she almost fell. Her wrist was caught and the large man stood up.

「Wait!? What are you planning to do!? I should have fulfilled the win condition—!?」

「The examiner didn't give the end signal right? That's unfortunate for you!」

The examiner Buzzheim intentionally overlooked the end of the match.

The moment Sharis's face paled, the man's finger caught the seam of her pilot suit.

「Wai-, sto.....!?」

「Oops, my finger got stuck in a strange place so it can't be he—guah!?」

The moment the seam of the pilot suit was slightly tearing, the man groaned and crouched down.

Sharis got dragged down with him, but someone caught her in their arms. It was Lux.

「Are you all right, Sharis-san?」

「Eh..... ye, yeah.....」

When she looked, the man was writhing while pressing his side.

Lux buried the handle of his wooden sword on the man's side.

「The New Kingdom examinee over there! That's considered as obstruction to another's match, you are disqualified!」

「.....Understood.」

Buzzheim announced with annoyance, but Lux accepted the decision calmly.

But, because Lux moved as though he accidentally stumbled during the match against his opponent and collided on Sharis's opponent by chance, the other examinees stopped that decision and after a discussion, it ended with only point reductions for Lux and Sharis.

「I'm sorry, Lux-kun.....」

「It's me who is sorry. The exam's point, got reduced—」

Sharis hung down her head in response to Lux's wry smile that looked troubled.

Buzzheim didn't learn from experience and he made the large man just now to do another match.

Most likely they intended to do the same thing as before, but that scheme immediately collapsed.

「WHAATT-!? A, against a small girl like this, llllll-!?」

This time the large man was beaten up thoroughly by the hands of Lux's childhood friend, Philuffy.

In the end, although the result was that on the whole Vanheim was slightly above in the average results, but the top grades were seized by Celis and the others, the members of the New Kingdom.

「Those bunches, are they really officer cadets.....!?」

「They must be a special group even among the New Kingdom right? I, if that's not the case, then how to explain—」

At first they were in fervor purely not wanting to lose against the New Kingdom, but gradually they were shocked and instead, now they were even

directing respectful gazes towards the Academy students.

But, even so Buzzheim and his hanger-ons were obstinately causing hindrances even at the third exam.

「Uwah!? It's going to cra—!?!」

Tillfur, who was doing a practical test of basic Drag-Rides operations, was shaken by other Wyverns that were fast approaching and she halted midway.

「Oops, sorry there. Looks like my track deviated a bit. After all our testing ground here is narrow, really sorry.」

「-.....」

His manner was polite, but that voice which was containing obvious threat caused Tillfur's face to become stiff.

「Number 32, a warning for you. You're going to get disqualified the next time you leave your course.」

The examiner was the said Buzzheim as expected.

It was an exam to cover the designated route within the allotted time using the basic operations of each Drag-Ride, like running or flying.

From Lux's point of view it was apparent that the man who was doing his exam at the same time as Tillfur next to her was making obstructions, but it was hard to prove it.

「Uuu.....」

Tillfur groaned in distress.

She understood that it was harassment from Buzzheim, but the stress that she might get hindered anytime added with the tension of doing an exam in a foreign country for the first time, her control was more disarrayed than she imagined.

The male officer who saw Tillfur's gliding and laughed approached to menace her again.

「Look, I'm coming from your left again. Watch out!」

The male officer intentionally called out while flying in a way that felt slightly

off from his own course, but when he approached until just barely,

「The flag that is your target is over there you know?」

「Wha—!?!」

Lux who was similarly in the middle of his practical exam using his Wyvern to fly grazed the route of the officer that was menacing Tillfur.

Lux had been flying ahead towards the route of the man that was trying to approach Tillfur.

Perhaps the officer was panicked and mistook his control, because his trajectory kept deviating without him being able to correct it, and he was falling to the ground.

「Watch out-!?!」

There, the Drag-Rides around that area yelled—but, Lux who swooped down using his Wyvern picked up the Wyvern of the male officer just before he crashed.

「Ku..... u」

「Please be careful. If you don't pay attention to the angle of your propulsion nozzle, you will fall right away.」

When Lux indifferently said that, the obstructive man fell silent in frustration.

「Diving down and making it in time in that situation.....」

「I see, the New Kingdom too isn't half bad.」

The officers of the Vanheim Principality uttered their admiration at the act that Lux displayed nonchalantly, while the expression of Buzzheim and his underlings distorted in displeasure.

The officer that was making a nuisance of himself failed, on the contrary he even got saved from his predicament. There was no greater humiliation than that.

On the other hand, a part of the officers were honestly in admiration seeing Lux's skill in handling a Drag-Ride.

「Oi, do you guys really have the leeway to worry about the officers of another

country?」

On and on, there were even voices raised in support of the New Kingdom.

The attitude of Lux and the others who didn't yield against pressure and also their strength, and then the dirty methods of Buzzheim were in the process of changing the atmosphere of the venue.

This was Lux's aim.

In the Vanheim Principality, there were military officers who supported Princess Milmiette, who was taking a friendly stance towards the New Kingdom, and the bunch like Buzzheim, who were treating the New Kingdom as an enemy.

In order to slant that air of rivalry to one side, he deliberately made the detractors to do their harassment openly instead, and then he showed how they smashed through all those schemes.

「Just as expected from my knight, he pulled it off really well.」

「Yes, that's right. But—there is no way we can just let him take on their squabble by himself alone.」

Lisha and Krulcifer who were watching from some distance away were talking with a hint of delight.

「Then, we too, let's go.」

Philuffy too, although her face was blank as usual, but she was starting to line up for the exam briskly, as though she was triggered by Lux's actions.

In the end, even after that, the obstructions didn't go well, and half of the top ten grades had the names of members of the New Kingdom placed in there when Greifer and Coral were excluded.

Part 4

「Then from here on, it will be the last exam of today. The fourth exam—the test of combat practical skills will begin!」

And then in the afternoon, the last exam was finally started.

When this exam was over, a review would be carried out by the examiners and the examinees' success or failure would be decided under the basis of each of their total scores.

But, the examiner who was obstructing the New Kingdom in each exam—Buzzheim was finally taking action personally.

「Lux Arcadia, Noct Leaflet, both names are to go to the practice grounds in the northeast block and hold a mock battle with an examiner. Finish your preparations and then standby.」

In order to shorten the time needed and also to inspect cooperation between Drag-Knights that was an indispensable aspect, a mock battle in the format of a pair challenging an examiner would be held.

Lux formed a pair with Noct, and the two of them sat side by side on the spectator seats that were located on the high ground of the outer wall.

「Take care of me, Noct.」

「Yes. I will do my best not to drag down Lux-san. I wish to do every effort that I can.」

The girl was calm like usual, but her voice was a bit stiff. It looked like she was a bit nervous.

「Did Airi look well?」

When Lux asked that to make small talk, Noct was unusually speaking hesitantly.

「—Yes. On the surface.....but」

「On the surface.....you mean?」

「This is my personal conjecture, but perhaps Airi has been worrying about something from some time ago. But, I don't know what that crucial something is.」

She muttered matter-of-factly, and before long she leaked out a quiet sigh.

「I tried to probe in my own way through normal conversation, but I didn't manage to find out anything. My deepest apologies for not being useful.」

Noct made a small bow with a quite tone.

Lux who saw that shook his head in a hurry.

「This isn't something Noct needs to apologize for. This is like the failure of me, her big brother for not understanding about his little sister. I'm really thankful just from you feeling that concerned about it.」

「Is, that so?」

「Yep. Besides see, Airi making fun of me when in front of someone else, usually that is something that doesn't really happen. That's why, for her to do that in front of you, her best friend, surely means that Airi too is letting her guard down around you so—」

Lux talked brightly to Noct who was unusually looking dejected.

「I'm thankful for your consideration. Thanks to that I feel a bit relieved. Then, in the mock battle against the examiner after this, I will lay a barrage of support fire from behind. I'll entrust the charging role to Lux-san.」

「Suddenly it's a merciless tactic like that!?!」

The change of topic that was just too drastic caused Lux to raise his voice reflexively.

「Is that so? Then, Lux-san is telling me, your junior, to come out to the front as the vanguard using Drake then.」

「No but, I, when I'm using Wyvern, I'm not suited for offense.....」

The exam this time was for examining the examinee's skill purely as a Drag-

Knight. Using things like remodeled weapons or a Divine Drag-Ride weren't permitted.

Therefore, things like Scale Blade that Lisha developed couldn't be used, they would have to fight using only basic armaments like normal Blade, Dagger, Breath Gun, Wire Tail, and so on.

「I only remembered now by chance but, in the practice ground the other day, Lux-san was peeping at everyone's underwear from the second floor didn't you? Even mine—」

「.....Please allow me to take on that role by all means.」

Towards Noct who was purposefully talking in monotone, Lux could do nothing but agreeing with a dry look.

「Yes. Thank you very much. But, Lux-san isn't denying about you staring fixedly at my underwear, so I'm feeling a bit creeped out though.」

「Denying or not, I didn't stare until that much you know-!? No, that's, because Noct's underwear was curious, so I unconsciously almost watched in fascination, but it's not like I was planning to peek right from the start—」

「.....」

When Lux said that in a flustered state, Noct fell completely silent.

(Wait, this is bad.....! I spontaneously said the truth—!)

Lux was in a panic while he fearfully took a peek at the girl's face thinking of what to do so that she would forgive him, it was then,

「Haa, Lux-san is a really troubling person.」

Her cheeks were vaguely blushing. She averted her gaze while muttering that with reproachful eyes.

The rare reaction that came from Noct who was always taciturn and calm caused Lux's heart to throb from shock.

While the two were having such a dialogue, the voice of the examiner could be heard.

「Next, Lux Arcadia and Noct Leaflet. Your exam will start in the third block!

Make your preparations at the designated place!」

Lux changed his look while Noct's expression also returned to her usual look after hearing those words.

「Let's go. Surely Buzzheim's aim at present is us.」

「Yes. It looks like this will become a fight that is worth doing.」

Noct responded to Lux's words by standing up from the bench.

They passed through the corridor and stood at one of the rings of the practice ground that was divided into four.

There, Buzzheim was waiting as expected with a challenging grin pasted on his mouth.

「I'm tired of waiting here. That I can take you on personally—is only at this time.」

After Lux advanced to the center of the ring, Buzzheim who was wearing a pilot suit pulled out his Sword Device.

Even without saying anything, his eyes were brimming with enough hostility.

「The exam time limit is ten minutes. It's a real battle format where combat skills and coordination of the pair are evaluated. The fundamental rule will conform to the rules of official mock battles. Are you ready?」

「—Come, the winged dragon of crest, the symbol of power. Obey my sword and soar, Wyvern.」

「—Come, the dragon of illusions that arrives at the origin. Establish a flickering form over and over again, Drake.」

Lux and Noct pulled out their Sword Devices almost at the same time and pushed the trigger on the handle while muttering the passcode.

The faint phosphorescence converging before their eyes formed shape and two Drag-Rides were summoned.

「Connect – On」

Right after the two equipped those, Buzzheim also similarly deployed his Drag-Ride and equipped it.

At a glance, his Drag-Ride was similar to a Wyvern, but its armor was a cut above the common Wyvern.

「EX Wyvern.....is it? You're using a powerful Drag-Ride just for a mere test.」

Noct pointed that out without letting her agitation show on the surface.

SpecialEX general purpose Drag-Rides were fundamentally given only to humans of High Class or above.

Just from this it showed that this man wasn't only all about position, but that he was also a powerful person of higher order.

「After all I'm taking on two opponents here. I heard that the Drag-Knights of the New Kingdom are excellent. Surely I'm not going to be able to take on you two without at least this much right?」

Buzzheim bared a smirk, perhaps in sarcasm towards the good results that the New Kingdom had scored until now.

Lux once again sensed that as expected, this wasn't just a mere practical exam.

「Drag-Ride's equipping is confirmed. The combat practical exam will begin after this.....」

The voice of the officer who took the role as the referee resounded in the ring. The atmosphere was tensing stingingly.

The moment the tension heightened to the limit, Buzzheim's arm moved slightly.

「—Battle, Start!」

Right after the referee's yell resounded, the back wings of Buzzheim's EX Wyvern shined and a vortex of air whirled on his back.

「Hah!」

Buzzheim accelerated until maximum speed in one breath along with a terrific eruption of light and he charged ahead.

「—!?!」

It was only for a few second, but he had controlled his Drag-Ride before the

match started to take his opponents by surprise.

Lux noticed the fact that the referee was someone under Buzzheim's influence and he was overlooking the foul play but—too late.

The enemy was already approaching right before Lux's eyes, swinging down a medium sized Blade.

「.....Ku!」

Buzzheim's rule violation and violent assault that was unthinkable for an exam.

The attack of the great sword that had the weight of an accelerating Drag-Ride put behind it drew a sharp trajectory.

The moment Lux strengthened his barrier and took a stance with his Blade to use it as a shield to parry the attack—he noticed that.

「—!?!」

In a timing of a mere instant, Lux quickly used the Blade that he readied as a shield for blocking to sweep horizontally. With that motion, he was barely able to divert the trajectory of Buzzheim's slash that was feigning to attack him while aiming at Noct.

「Uu, aa.....!」

—But, that attack which had maximum energy filled into the Blade couldn't be completely blocked. The Drake's barrier was shaved and a part of the shoulder armor broke.

Unable to endure, Noct leaped backward and escaped from Buzzheim's range.

Using that opening Lux laid out a barrage with his Breath Gun and cut off the flow of a pursuing attack.

「Oops..... aren't you better than I thought. I might have done something bad making my subordinates trying something on you guys..... For those idiots this is something over their head.」

Buzzheim was blocking the barrage using his barrier while showing a smug smirk.

As expected, a Wyvern that wasn't even tuned was a little in a disadvantage against the output of an EX Wyvern that was a strengthened version of general purpose Drag-Ride.

Buzzheim's composure was exactly because he knew that.

In this situation where Lux was unable to use Critical Hit using Scale Blade, destroying the enemy using normal method was next to impossible.

The only method to breakthrough this was to make use of the opponent's low aptitude for Drag-Rides because he was a male, and waited it out for him to run out of breath, but because this was an exam, the time limit was short, so that method couldn't be used.

If Lux was alone, he would be able to continue to defend without problem.

(But, what do I do in case he continued to aim at Noct?)

The match result itself shouldn't be directly related to their exam's success or failure, but there was no way he could let the enemy injure them.

「What's wrong? It won't be an exam if you just defend you know? Show me the skill of you two.」

「.....」

After hesitating for a few seconds, Lux advanced forward by himself just like he had arranged beforehand with Noct.

『Please be careful Lux-san! This man is—serious!』

Noct who had a part of her armor broken urged for caution using Dragon Voice from behind.

『Please don't worry about me! If you recklessly start attacking from your end, you will be overcome from the spec difference. In the worst case that Lux-san gets hurt, I won't have any face to look at Airi.』

Noct's prediction wasn't wrong. —But,

『You're wrong, Noct.』

Lux talked to Noct behind him with a calm voice without any fervor or unease.

『If I let him hurt you more than this, it's me who will be the one that cannot

face Airi.』

『Lux, san.....』

『Let's fight together. If it's us—we can surely win.』

『.....Yes. Then—can I ask you for instructions?』

「You guys aren't coming? Then it can't be helped. I'll use all the remaining time—to crush you!」

Buzzheim who exposed a wicked look flew aiming at Noct once more.

The remaining time limit was approximately seven minutes.

The enemy's Drag-Ride danced in the sky in order to settle the match during that time.

Part 5

「.....So this is where you are, Sir Singlen.」

Outside the outer wall of the practice ground's ring, the metal window bars that were set at the high ground.

At the audience seats which were created not for military officers making use of the facility, but for important guests who visited, the Blue Tyrant—Singlen Shelbrit was crossing his legs while sprawling down.

The tip of his excess sleeve fluttered from his casual hand wave. That was his only response to his subordinate's voice.

That overcoat with a strange design was a special item even among the White Ridge Knight Order of the Blackend Kingdom.

It was something specially developed by combining a pilot suit with a Drag-Ride's armor, an item that was called armor suit.

The man who called out to him had half his face hidden with a white helmet, the long hair that was peeking out from the gaps belonged to a man with age past middle-aged.

In contrast to Singlen who had a small stature like a young boy, this man was an owner of a tall body that was approximately 2 mel.

「You are going to catch cold if you stay in this kind of place. In the first place, something like the promotion exam of this Class isn't something that will be worth watching for you at this point.」

His tone was calm and courteous.

But, the voice of the old knight was containing an emotion that couldn't be hidden even with his attitude of keeping up appearances.

Disdain and disgust toward the weak. And then, something like an irritation.

That old knight was giving off a personality that was characteristic of a soldier who had overcome being on the verge of death several thousand times, and came to consider only strength and carrying out one's duty as righteousness.

「This show is not something that contemptible. There is a way to enjoy a game as a game. You are too serious. How about you relax for a bit huh, Zweigbergk?」

Singlen smiled while lightly shaking the wine glass that was filled with crimson liquid.

Even after being soothed like that, it seemed that the old knight called Zweigbergk found it hard to agree with his master's words. He kept silent.

「You see, Zwei. I'm different from you, I don't have a taste that is unable to enjoy fellow small fries killing each other. Something that is really not worthy to be watched, is a fight that is only of pretension. I call something like that a farce. It doesn't matter even if it's this very patient and tolerant me, I won't be able to endure it if I'm made to see such a thing in front of my eyes. A small fry of that level won't even become useful to measure the Black Hero. Just watching is a pointless waste of time.」

「Then, my lord—」

「Yeah, I'll leave cleaning up this alcohol to you. I'm going to ascertain that guy's true character.」

Singlen threw the glass that still had wine remaining in it to the old knight and he quickly cleared out the sheath in his sword belt.

He formed that strange smile that didn't reach his eyes, and at the same time he directed his sharp eye glint to below.

Part 6

「How long are you going to keep running around? Try showing me the pride of the New Kingdom!」

Buzzheim laughed loudly while repeatedly flying in order to take the back of Noct persistently.

Lux cut in on his trajectory again and again in order to prevent that. He blocked the slash with his sword.

With a general purpose Drag-Ride Drake that was specialized for rear support and gathering intelligence, it was nearly impossible to exchange blows properly with Buzzheim due to the spec difference.

Therefore, Lux was forced into a one-sided defensive battle in order to cover for Noct.

「Aren't you going to take revenge for those noble girls you are wagging your tail to? Or else, are you getting cold feet?」

Buzzheim was swiveling around in the sky with high speed so that he couldn't be locked on while laughing fearlessly.

Seeing Noct that was devoting herself to evasion and Lux who was protecting her, he attempted such provocation.

But, that was Buzzheim's trap.

He planned to aim at the moment the opponent switched to offense and became defenseless, shooting them down then instead.

(However—this is a chance)

The moment Buzzheim deliberately stopped his attack and showed his composure, Lux saw through that and moved.

「Hah! Taking the bait huh you fool! —Howling Howl!」

The vortex of shockwaves that shook the air was fired from the head part of Buzzheim's armor.

But, Lux who predicted that transmitted his energy and turned his Blade into shield, breaking through the wall of shockwave.

「.....What-!?!」

It was difficult to see through the opponent's attack pattern just from a few minutes of battle.

But, the options against highly mobile Wyvern, and how Buzzheim's attack were mainly using the difference in spec between the Drag-Rides.

Lux calculated the answer using his countless battle experience based mainly on using those two points.

「Nuuh!?!」

But, even so perhaps it was as expected from the ability of an EX Class that possessed an EX Wyvern, Buzzheim shifted his trajectory without delay and without pause he dodged Lux's slash toward him.

Aiming at the opening that Lux exposed from making a big swing, he held aloft his large Blade.

「Drop dead, you Old Empire's dog-!—tsu!?!」

The moment Buzzheim bared his wicked look and he was going to swing down his sword, he noticed Lux's calm eyes.

The angle of Lux's gaze wasn't directed at Buzzheim, but behind him.

When he reflexively looked above the ring, Noct's figure was vanishing.

It was the camouflage ability that was one of Drake's special functions.

It was a stealth ability to cover one's own figure by assimilating into the surrounding landscape, but the figure would become exposed when the Drag-Ride turned to offense.

「Planning to outwit me huh!?! That method is—obsolete already!」

He feigned to slash at Lux, but he then twirled in a circle and flashed his sword to behind him.

But—that Blade cut empty air along with Buzzheim’s confidence.

「—Yes. The cause of your defeat, is that you are looking down on your opponents thinking that it’s obsolete.」

「Wh-.....at!?!」

Noct wasn’t behind Buzzheim.

For a flying type Drag-Knight, having their back where the propulsion device was located taken by the enemy in a defenseless state was a situation that they should be the most vigilant against.

If a Drake with its basic performance that was inferior by one or two levels wanted to find a means of survival, this was the only moment where that was possible.

That was why Buzzheim saw through Lux’s aim, and he predicted that the Drake which covered its figure with camouflage would attack him from behind.

He was convinced by none other than the direction of the gaze of Lux who he was facing. Lux wasn’t staring at Buzzheim but behind him.

But, the location where Noct was standing wasn’t right behind Buzzheim.

The Blade that was swung with semicircle trajectory didn’t hit anything, and then Buzzheim’s open stance was in a position that was approaching near.

「Don’t tell me, you bastards—!?!」

「Yes. Please be careful so that you don’t get injured.」

In a flash, Noct pulled the trigger of her cannon that had been filled with energy.

「Guh, OOOO.....-!?!」

The violent torrent of shockwave that was fired from close range blew away the EX Wyvern.

Because Buzzheim allocated the energy from his Force Core into his slash, he was unable to deploy a solid barrier and his armament was smashed.

「Ga, HaaA.....!」

Buzzheim's back struck the stone wall at the far behind and he fainted in agony.

With that, it looked like the match was concluded for the time being.

「Thank you very much for the tactic instruction, Lux-san.」

Noct's tone that was indifferent as usual was really like her, Lux thought.

「No. It's thanks to Noct. Your positioning and reaction, both were really skillful—」

When Lux said that with a smile in response, Noct showed an expression that looked just a bit surprised.

「No. Those words are too generous for me. I was only carrying out Lux-san's instructions, both in strategy and tactic. A person who is just performing what they were told cannot be called as a full-fledged servant.」

「Is, is that so.....」

Lux smiled awkwardly. He wondered if she thought he was just flattering her.

But,

「Yes. But, it's also a lesson for me. After all, I almost feel completely satisfied just from receiving your praise from doing something ordinary.」

Noct looked at Lux and floated a faint smile on her lips while she muttered that.

As though she was conveying to him, that by no means she was thinking anything bad of Lux's words—

「Then, is it better if I say it like this? Don't let me down okay, Noct.」

「Yes. I'm looking forward to working together with you, Lux-san.」

Noct lightly bowed her head while still wearing her Drag-Ride.

That moment when he was going to return a smile at her, a cold dread ran through Lux's spine as a chill.

「What the hell are you two prattling over there! The exam is still—it ain't over yet-!」

The EX Wyvern that crashed on the outer wall with its driving force suspended.

It rallied over itself unnoticed and readied a large sword that was clad with energy, rushing ahead in super low altitude with a speed like an arrow.

「—Lux-san!?!」

Noct quickly readied her Blade against that expression that was distorted from rage and humiliation.

But, the killing intent that Lux feared wasn't that.

Buzzheim's charge that was like a raging squall.

The EX Wyvern that was drawing a straight line while leaving behind afterimages had its armored arm lopped off along with a thunderous sound.

「—Whaa-!?!」

That destruction and impact that attacked his body without any advance warning at all caused him to lose his balance and crash on the ground.

「—!?!」

Not just Lux and Noct, the other Drag-Knights who were receiving their exam also stopped moving simultaneously.

「Guh, GaaAAAAAAAH.....!」

A hoarse scream resounded in the area, the blood soaked Buzzheim was toppled sideways along with his Drag-Ride.

Without pause he crashed on the stone wall at the opposite side, and this time he didn't twitch anymore.

「——」

The sudden horrible accident caused everyone there to hold their breaths.

What cut apart that silence that was created for a few seconds was the voice of a certain man.

「Really sorry, I missed my aim a tiny bit. My bad, my bad.」

A small figure wearing a blue coat appeared while scratching his head with a

look that showed not even a shred of guilt.

The Blue Tyrant, Singlen Shelbrit was looking down to the practice grounds from the audience seats above, in a state of wearing a special equipment general purpose Drag-Ride, Drake. (TN: Just to avoid confusion, it's not that Singlen's Drake has special equipment, but it's that a Drake is categorized as a special equipment general purpose Drag-Ride, what with all its nifty functions.) 「.....The Blade just now, was your—?」

Lux asked with a voice that was tinged with caution.

「You aren't going to say even a single thanks? The youngsters these days are really disagreeable huh.」

In response, Singlen grinned fearlessly and jumped down to the ring's soil along with his Drake.

「Thi, this is.....what in the world is going on!? Sir Singlen!?!」

When the examiners at the area who saw that came rushing in panic, Singlen shrugged his shoulders in exasperation.

「I'm requested to act as the general manager of this exam. Take away the examiner license from the idiot sleeping over there. Originally, the exam should resume from square one after someone got blown away until outside the ground, but that guy broke the rule and launched a surprise attack.You need me to explain the exam's regulations further?」

「Uu, aa..... Si, sir-.....! Understood-!」

With a glare from Singlen, the examiners who were asking questions backed away in panic.

After the fainted Buzzheim was carried away by a stretcher, Singlen turned a smile towards Lux and Noct.

「Now then, that was an annoying hindrance huh, chore handyman. Unfortunately it seems that there is no free examiner here, but you still have four minutes left. In their place, I, the overseer here, will personally give you your exam.」

「.....」

—‘It’s dangerous.’ Warning bells were ringing inside Lux’s head.

This man threw a Blade at a Drag-Ride flying at high speed and lopped off an armored arm with that one attack, like shooting down a termite dancing in the air.

It was abnormal. Whether it was that miraculous feat that was done by using a general purpose Drag-Ride. And also that mercilessness where there was not even a twitch in his expression from almost killing Buzzheim.

But, till the end it was within the scope of the exam. Then—

「Noct, can you still go?」

「Yes. It’s possible if it’s the remaining four minutes.」

「.....Then, it’s decided. Let’s begin right away, oi.」

The officer that received a glance from Singlen raised his voice just as he was prompted to.

「Battle, Restart!」

Together with that voice, Singlen drove his special equipment general purpose Drag-Ride, Drake and lightly readied his Blade.

「You are also using a Drake? It’s basic specs are the lowest even among the three types of general purpose Drag-Rides, is it okay?」

Noct pointed that out while frowning slightly.

Singlen’s choice was also unexpected for Lux.

Of course, although it was the special equipment type, Drake, its strength depended on how the Drag-Knight used it, but to take on two opponents in a ring with good visibility like this time, it should be a type of Drag-Ride that was definitely at a disadvantage.

Although he was a member of the Seven Dragon Paladins, a large part of his ability should also be made up from the Divine Drag-Ride that he used.

From what Lux was seeing, the Drake in front of him didn’t have any sign that it had been specially remodeled.

And yet why did he chose that kind of Drag-Ride?

「Is the handicap not enough? Should I throw away several of my weapons too?」

Noct fell silent seeing Singlen's condescending smile.

In exchange Lux spoke as the proxy of her will.

「It's fine like that. Then—here I come.」

Lux and Noct readied their weapons at a distance of ten-odd mel apart.

They had a light briefing with each other using Dragon Voice and concluded their talk.

「Four minutes remaining. You two can come at me, or run around to escape—I mean, enduring the battle. It's your freedom.」

The way he was talking was provocative as usual.

But, they needed to be even more vigilant in this battle than before.

『Noct, we are going to split and hold him back in place with medium-range attacks. If it looks dangerous then I'll move forward.』

『Yes. Roger.』

Drake itself shouldn't have high attack power, but Lux who saw that it was dangerous to forcefully attack or to thoroughly defend gave such instruction.

They would split into two units and take a distance where they would be able to support each other and also to take advantage if Singlen attacked one of them.

「Kukukukuku, so you are taking the worst choice of all things.....」

In response, when Singlen saw that, he sniggered while standing still.

Lux who saw Singlen stopped moving aimed at his armored leg using Breath Gun.

Because Drake didn't have flying functions, if a bullet barrage was laid out under its feet, its movement would be stopped.

As though seeing through that, Singlen's Drake quickly leaped aside.

Light and wind were ejected from the back of the armor's feet. It was a

StepLeap that was performed by a jump and high speed movement that was limited to a single step. But, Noct was waiting for that moment when he moved.

「—Yes. Just as aimed.」

Noct who activated the camouflage function and hid showed her figure in order to attack.

She flowed energy into her Blade and reinforced it—with the shortest motion she aimed at his shoulder.

‘Get him’—even Lux was convinced of that.

That attack couldn’t be dodged using Singlen’s Drake right after using Step.

Even if he wasn’t defeated by this attack, it was possible to press him back.

「Aa, certainly it’s just as aimed. —My aim that is.」

But, that instant when the Blade that Noct swung almost touched Singlen’s Drake, that slash was easily repelled by barrier and it was parried away.

「Eh.....!？」

Noct was dumbfounded with a face that didn’t understand what happened.

Right after that, faster than Lux could react, Singlen’s rotated the Blade in his hand, drawing a semicircle arc.

A sharp slash struck Noct’s back and she was blown away until outside the ring.

She crashed on the wall at the edge and a cloud of dust fluttered intensely.

「Kuh, u.....!？」

「Noct-!？」

「—Yes. I’m, all right, so.....」

Noct somehow replied with an expression that couldn’t hide her pain.

Perhaps because she was taken by surprise, or perhaps because her Force Core was accurately aimed at, her Drake was forced into inactivity with just one strike even though it was done by the same kind of Drake.

And yet—Lux didn’t understand how Noct got done in instead.

「How about stopping the farce any time now? It's because you cover for that gloomy small fry and try to score points by playing with petty tricks that she met that kind of experience.」

「.....-!? Tha, light is—!?」

The instant Lux reacted to Singlen's provocation, he noticed.

Countless figures of light floated around the general purpose Drag-Ride the opponent was wearing.

Rectangle figures displaying enumeration, symbols, and graphics of ancient language.

It was the mode of tuning that was often seen when using the SystemControl System of a Drag-Ride.

But, Lux thought that till the end it was a function for use outside of combat.

「What are you surprised about? I was just tampering a bit to release the output setting of a part. I'm still not doing anything significant you know?」

Singlen floated a battle hungry grin and he readied his Blade.

The remaining time was two minutes.

Lux's survival rate would go up if he ran around like this, but there was no way he could stay quiet.

(Then—)

Lux readied his Cannon and quickly loaded it with energy, and he fired.

It was a diversion in order to see through the opponent's technique, and also to probe the enemy, but Singlen reacted in an unimaginable way.

「—Wha!?」

He didn't pull back or even dodge against the cannon shot, but leaped forward.

That option that was originally impossible caused Lux to open his eyes wide, right after that— he saw that.

(The barrier— it's not deployed at the front!?)

Against the opponent's attack, it was natural to reinforce the barrier—even if not, the barrier should automatically get deployed.

But, Singlen's Drake didn't do that.

It wouldn't make it in time. Death would await if the attack hit directly on the flesh—the moment Lux feared that would happen, something hard to believe occurred.

「—Battle Array – VicissitudesSenjin – Ruten.」

Singlen's lips distorted and whispered something. Right after that, the torrent of impact and heat fired from the Cannon was deflected to the side with a spark.

Without even blocking using barrier or evading, that attack was warded off from the front.

「.....-!?!」

「Do you still have such leeway with this me as your opponent?」

Singlen sharply drove his four armored legs and stepped into Lux's bosom in one breath.

The moment Singlen's Drake came close while driving in a high speed thrust, Lux quickly flew away from that spot.

He laid out a barrage using his Breath Gun in order to cut off the flow of pursuing attacks.

「Fuh.....」

Singlen dodged that by jumping to the side and he swung his Blade once more.

「I see! But that's—don't tell me」

Lux was struck with admiration at the same time he noticed that truth.

Singlen's 『technique』 that parried his attack—he noticed its terrifying true identity.

「You are forming the barrier itself to move and deflect the attack!?!」

「I'm really pleased you noticed. It pays off showing it to you several times.」

Singlen snorted and stopped his legs.

However, even after seeing through that, Lux couldn't hide his agitation.

Normally, the Drag-Ride's barrier would react to the danger towards the user and activated automatically, furthermore changing the degree of its strength from the user's control was the basic.

But Singlen deliberately stopped the Drag-Ride's automatic generation of barrier. And then, he generated a force field just before the opponent's attack hit him, then the momentum from that repelled the attack.

From right to left, or from below to above, he didn't block the attack, but parried it.

It was certainly possible in theory—but,

(If he mistakes a step, he will get fully hit by the attack and get serious damage.....no, it's possible he would even die instantly from receiving the attack directly on his flesh. Such thing, this man is—) It was an undisputed superhuman feat. An advanced technique that was unusable without transcending even the fear of death.

This man who easily pulled that off caused Lux to shudder.

「What's wrong? If you don't come then I'll be the one who goes there.」

One of the Drake's four legs kicked on the ground and the Drag-Ride charged towards Lux in one bound.

The Blade struck, which Lux blocked in a hair's breadth. He was pushed back for a few mel due to the impact running from that sword tip.

「Ku.....!」

—Heavy. A single attack of a general purpose Drag-Ride that wasn't even modified went through his armor and numbed his arm.

Singlen unleashed his slash by operating together the driving force of every part in his Drag-Ride, in addition he put the propulsive power from his Step behind the blow.

Pushed back by that attack power that was unthinkable to come from a mere Drake, the best Lux could do was only protecting himself.

「Lux, san.....」

Noct's armor was dispelled outside the arena and she was brought away from there. Her voice could be heard distantly.

But, there was no way he could just keep getting done in like this.

The remaining time was a few dozen seconds. If he didn't return at least a blow during that time—

「Hah, are you also thinking about wiping the ass of that small fry? You want to make her feel better by returning at least one blow to me?」

「.....-!？」

Singlen laughed as though he had seen through Lux's thinking.

「What a really despicable man. Are you satisfied like that, if you are getting used so that you can say something like 『it's for the sake of someone』?」

「—Shut up!」

Lux whispered while driving away the high speed consecutive attacks Singlen unleashed.

「You saved them from their predicaments many times while you still kept wearing the collar of a criminal, I see that the New Kingdom too is a gathering of low-lives.」

「.....You're wrong, the criminal's collar is something that I myself wished for!」

Lux tried to take distance by attempting to fly to the sky—but, it was as though even that was seen through. Singlen didn't overlook Lux amassing a bit of propulsive power and he leaped to attack.

「——」

It was an attack from overhead that took him by surprise.

But, Lux was waiting for that.

The super high speed attack that came by means of complete alignment of

both mind control operation and body control operation, Quick Draw.

Lux operated the frame of his whole body and swung the blade that he was holding in backhand grip into an upward thrust.

His aim was the vital spot of a Drag-Ride, the shoulder where the Drake's Force Core existed.

It should be impossible for the Drake that had leaped to change trajectory midair but—

「.....What a bore.」

- Bachii-!* A barrier was deployed once more just before the attack hit, parrying Lux's Blade.

「Kuh.....!?!」

The attack that should hit with certainty was dodged and his opening was exposed instead.

(How!? Did he predict even until my use of Quick Draw.....?)

It was an impossible reaction speed, but that was the only explanation he could think of.

Singlen's attack that was unleashed in a flash scraped off Wyvern's barrier and blew Lux away to far behind.

Wyvern's output lowered with its shoulder's armor destroyed instead.

Lux just barely held on so that his armor wasn't dispelled but, his defense—was completely destroyed.

「—I'll say it one more time. Stop protecting the useless small fries. You are just wasting your strength.」

Singlen looked down on Lux with a pitying look. Lux silently took a stance with his Blade against Singlen.

The only option left was for him to make his final gamble in the remaining ten-odd seconds.

「Hahaa, I get it. You are scared right? Of the reality that the thing that you

once accomplished by believing it as correct, might be mistaken.」

「.....」

Lux's head was rapidly turning cold the instant he heard those words.

At the same time a boiling impulse welled up inside him. He followed that impulse and held up his Blade.

「Hahahahaha. Really, what an effeminate man. In the past you took action by your own will and strength, and fought 『for the sake of the people』. But, it unreasonably failed and ended in the worst result. That's why right now, you are basking in the feeling of atoning by directly listening to other people's request—their wish and fulfilling it.」

- Thump*. Lux's heart pounded along with a sharp pain.

Why, was this man able to speak as though he knew about those circumstances in the Arcadia Empire—as if he knew about everything?



Lux deserted even such doubt and his emotions were highly strung.

「But see, that won't even do any good to the requester—to the bunch at that academy. What you're doing is nothing more than diverting yourself from your own desire by looking after the bunch around you. They will rely on you, get spoiled, thinking that you being there with your battle strength is only normal, thinking that the result obtained by making use of you is a matter of course. Hey Lux, come together with me. You should stand in a place where your true strength and worth can have practical use.」

「—Shut up-!」

Lux's Wyvern burst out light from its back wings, giving rise to a sudden gust and it flew.

His three hidden techniques couldn't be used with this half-broken Drag-Ride. Even so Lux moved and struck with Blade that was clad in energy.

「Is being used just as you are told your wish? It feels like something thought by you who were abandoned by both the country and its people, and even lost your own great cause.」

Singlen continued to dodge and parry all of Lux's slashes using Battle Array – Vicissitudes.

He didn't counterattack.

He continued to dodge the attack that Lux was unleashing in earnest.

It was just like Lux's nickname the Weakest Undefeated, as though he was showing off a transcendent defense.

But, Lux didn't stop his attacks even then.

He sent out his sword to shut up Singlen's mouth, so at the very least he wouldn't have the composure to talk.

Within less than a few seconds, a few dozen slashes cut through the air.

「What an unreasonable man—then it can't be helped. I'll make you meet a painful experience here.」

Singlen who was showing composure amidst that offense evaded using Battle

Array – Vicissitudes. At the same time he used the momentum of his Drag-Ride's turning around and struck his Blade on Lux's back.

「Lux-!?!」

Lisha who finished her exam and was watching from the audience seats yelled.

But,

「Howling Howl!!」

「—What?!」

Lux whose attacks were evaded and exposed an opening generated shockwave from his head part and struck the ground. With that repellent force, Singlen's attack that aimed at his back was shifted.

Naturally, Howling Howl didn't the enemy that wasn't in front of him, but for the first time he could derail the enemy's calculation.

(Now, if it's this instant—!)

Singlen was completely taken by surprise.

Lux was convinced of that and unleashed a counter attack with his sword's returning movement, right after that, 「Kukuku.....」

Singlen certainly could be seen grinning within a time that was even less than a second.

- Pakii!* The Blade that Lux's Wyvern swung was instantly broken apart and countless fragments scattered before his eyes.

「Blocking with Blade.....!?! But, how!?!」

Singlen's dealt with the attack merely by immediately using his basic weapon the Blade to meet the slash.

The general purpose Drag-Ride Wyvern surpassed Drake in the energy output that could be poured into a weapon.

Therefore, even if Lux's attack was blocked, originally it wouldn't be him who got outpushed.

And yet—how?

Looking closer, countless light images were floating around Singlen's armor once more.

Tuning that was done by mind mental operation. That meant,

「-.....!? Don't tell me—」

「—Battle Array – Aeon FireSenjin – Kouka.」

「——」

Singlen's Blade that was tinged with intense light attacked Lux.

His guard that consisted of his half-broken Blade and barrier that was automatically deployed were broken through, and a part of his armor was smashed apart.

「U, ah.....-!?」

Impact pierced his pilot suit and he was blown away.

His armored arm grasped the ground and he held his ground.

He was just barely still within the battle zone.

「The power just now, what in the world.....!」

「.....Battle Array – Aeon Fire. Another technique that uses tuning.」

Singlen told that to the bewildered Lux.

「Tuning.....!? Just now, the energy output that was poured into the armament was—!?」

「That's right. I cut the Force Core energy that is normally used for the driving force of other partw and concentrated it solely into my weapon. Although, in that state, other operation functions and my defense power drop down. It will be suicide if it's used poorly.」

「Kuh.....!?」

Lux readied his Dagger to try to resist somehow, but the Wyvern that received impact on its Force Core didn't move properly.

He couldn't dodge the attack from the Blade that was raised by Singlen who

was approaching from the front.

「Weakest Undefeated, your alias ends here. You found a bad match here.」

The match was going to be decided along with that sentence of Singlen, it was then—

「—The match is over! Stop fighting, immediately and dispel your armor!」

The officer who served as referee yelled that along with a high-pitched bell sound.

Singlen's Blade stopped just before it touched Lux's armor.

「Ku-ku-ku, alas, that's disappointing. Good grief how unfortunate. Even though I almost brought you down in less than a second.」

「.....Why did you stop your attack?」

Lux dispelled his Wyvern's armor while objecting with a chilly tone.

With Singlen's strength, he should be able to bring down the blade before the referee called for a stop.

No—in the first place this man was fighting while completely grasping the remaining time.

Singlen who similarly dispelled his armor was slowly walking towards outside the ring, then he stopped midway.

「What a selfish guy. Even though you didn't listen to my talk the other night. Good grief, what a really selfish handyman.」

Singlen turned only his head towards Lux, showed a smile that only distorted his lips, and continued.

「How many times you're planning to make me say the same thing? Stop protecting the weak without any ability or talent who are only clinging on your strength. Like that you won't be able to reach your big brother forever. No, far from that, you will get dragged down by those bunches and someday you will lose something.」

「.....」

- grit* Lux gripped his Sword Device hard, but now that the exam was over he couldn't lay his hand on Singlen.

「Such thing—」

「I'll listen to you again later. Staying here will cause a hindrance for the next exam.I'm praying that good things will result from this, okay, my future compatriot.」

Singlen ended with that and turned his back as though to say that he didn't feel like responding anymore.

After wordlessly seeing him off, Lux also left.

The Blue Tyrant.

His contact with the man who was a preeminent powerful person even amidst the Seven Dragon Paladins closed its curtains for the moment with that.

Part 7

「Fuu.....」

After that, Lux received a health checkup in the medical office before returning to his shared room in the lodging house. There he changed into his plain clothes and took a rest.

It was a dreary room with simple furniture lined up.

He sat in front of the single table that was put inside and silently rested his body.

The Class Promotion Exam was over with that combat exam being the last.

The result became a draw because of Singlen's intrusion, but the battle against Buzzheim himself ended up in their side's victory, so they still didn't know if they failed or passed the exam itself.

Even Noct who was sent flying outside the ring didn't seem to be particularly injured.

He wasn't bothered that he was cornered until an inch before defeat by an opponent that was similarly using a general purpose Drag-Ride.

But—he somehow couldn't calm down.

He understood that the words that Singlen said in the middle of the fight were provocations.

And yet for some reason the scene of the past that he should have gotten over with, right now they were resurrected in the back of Lux's mind.

(Why am I—continuing to do chores for five years?)

In order to chase the whereabouts of Fugil who betrayed, or perhaps tricking Lux right from the start and destroyed the plan of revolution.

And then, there was no other path Lux could take, except looking around at

the state of the country that was caused by his own actions.

But, he met Lisha and the others, and he thought that he wanted to become the strength of the girls who would become the New Kingdom's cornerstone.

Right now when the battle he tried to accomplish was over, that was the wish of the present Lux.

「And yet, why—eh?」

When Lux whispered to himself, he suddenly felt a presence outside the room.

He thought that it was odd and went to check the situation, he could hear a small voice from across the door.

「But this is a problem. I'm bad at consoling or cheering up someone, but.....」

He noticed that the owner of the voice that sounded somewhat vexed was Lisha.

But, what was odd was that she didn't knock the door for some reason.

When he tried opening the door quietly, he could see the figure of Lisha loitering aimlessly with her back turned to the door.

「What should I do to make Lux cheer up? That, perhaps holding hands is.....」

「What are you doing, Lisha-sama?」

「—!? UWAAAAH.....!?」

Lisha turned around in panic when Lux called out.

Her face was bright red. She looked his way while looking flustered.

「Do, don't surprise me so suddenly! I'm, that's—, I'm a bit, concerned with how you're doing.....I guess.」

「Anyway, how about talking inside the room?」

Lux smiled wryly while inviting the blushing and fidgeting Lisha inside.

「I received tea from the dining hall, so please wait for a bit.」

「I, I don't need it. It's not like, I'm coming to get you fuss about me.....」

When they sat down side by side on the bed, Lisha spoke that with a small voice.

She stared still at Lux with an upward gaze and a look that was slightly nervous.

「Is something the matter?」

「.....No, I'm just thinking that you aren't completely as down as I thought. That, about the match just now, I thought that you were bothered by that, but—」

「The match just now.....is it?」

「Yeah, based on the rules, the match wasn't settled, but it was the first time I saw you cornered that far, so—」

「Aa.....」

Lux finally noticed Lisha's intention from that sentence.

She was coming here because she was worried about Lux who was completely helpless against Singlen.

「I'm sorry. Even though I'm Lisha-sama's knight, I showed you something unbecoming.....」

When Lux apologetically smiled bitterly, Lisha shook her head hurriedly.

「N, no such thing at all! Your strength is something that I know best more than anyone. That's not it—」

Lisha faltered once more and she averted her gaze to the side, then she murmured.

「I'm always helped by you, so I also want to do the same for you. That, I was thinking how to cheer you up, and when I was loitering there, you found me out but.....」

Seeing Lisha looking down shyly, Lux suddenly felt warmth inside his chest.

「Thank you, very much. Just from being able to see Lisha-sama's face, I'm feeling really full of energy.」

Lux said that with a smile, then he grasped the hand of Lisha beside him.

「-.....!?!」

When Lux conveyed his feeling of gratitude straightforwardly, Lisha's face turned bright red.

「Lisha-sama is always bright, a forward-looking hard worker, so just from looking at you I feel strength welling up from inside—. That's why, I'm happy just from Lisha-sama coming here like this.」

「U, au.....」

Lisha's face was red until her ears. She staggered with a dazed expression.

Her body losing strength could be felt through the hand that Lux was holding.

「Lisha-sama? Is something the matter?」

「N, no, it's nothing. Rather than that, it's—. The, then, can I also do, a good luck charm so you can feel even more energetic?」

「Eh.....?」

「Clo, close your eyes a bit for me. If you do that then surely, I'll be able to do it so—」

「Under, stood.」

Lux obediently closed his eyes even while thinking vaguely that it was strange.

‘What is she planning to do?’, he thought inside his head, then right after that.

- Munyuu-*, something soft touched Lux's upper arm.

「-.....!?!」

The moment his eyes reflexively opened in surprise from that sensation, an unexpected scene flew into his eyes.

「——」

With her eyes closed, Lisha was slowly pushing out her lips, moving toward Lux's direction.

Because she was trying to bring her face close to Lux like that, her breast

pressed on his upper arm.

Lisha's breasts that were largish for her petite body.

The sweet softness and elasticity from them caused Lux's heart to throb while he let out a panicked voice.

「Wha, what are planning, Lisha-sama?」

「.....!?! UWAAH!?! Wha, what are you doing huh!?! I told you don't open your eyes—」

「I, I'm sorry. B, but that, your breast touched—」

「U, a.....」

Perhaps she finally noticed what Lux pointed out, it was like fire was blowing from Lisha's face and she backed away.

「Wha, what the hell are you thinking you pervert!?! A, after finally it's just a little bit more, I can, kiss on your cheek—」

「Eh.....?」



「I, it's nothing-!? Ra, rather than that, is there something else that you want to do!?!」

Seeing Lisha prattling without pause as though to cover up something, Lux thought for a bit.

After hesitating for a few seconds, Lux resolved himself and spoke.

「Then, please teach me a bit. Regarding the Drag-Ride tuning that Singlen was using—」

Part 8

「I'm back Lux-kun. Thanks for your hard work in today's exams.」

After hearing about the details of tuning from Lisha and they parted from each other, Coral returned to the room.

The face of the youth with androgynous features pulled back Lux's mind from the reverie he was absorbed in.

When Lux was unable to reply back well, Coral sat down beside him.

「You are unusually absentminded huh. Are you worried about the exam?」

「That's not, it but.....」

He had settled on an answer to a certain degree regarding the matter of Drag-Rides from his talk with Lisha.

However, at the exam this time, the Triad received obstructions from Buzzheim. He was a little worried regarding how their evaluation would drop.

Coral was staring with a pondering look at such Lux, and before long he muttered.

「.....Hey, Lux-kun. You want to try going out to play after this?」

「Eh.....?」

Lux was bewildered at Coral's sudden proposal.

「You said after this, but it's already night, it should be forbidden to go out—」

Lux held the impression that this youth was friendly but diligent, but the current Coral was making a mischievous smile that looked like a young kid.

「Not really, though we were told that 『unnecessary outing』 is no good. But, slipping out at this time will take a bit of effort, so I'll prepare first.」

After saying that with a smile that wouldn't accept any refusal, Coral rushed

away busily.

Putting aside Lux who was baffled and wondered whether he misheard, that chance soon arrived.

Part 9

「—And, why does even this me have to accompany you guys going out?」

Dozens of minutes later. Inside a small bar in the urban area of Ruin's Gear, Greifer was showing a bitter face.

Inside the old gloomy bar built from wood, men who had finished their work for the day were crowding the place full.

It was the first time Lux entered a bar of another country, but fundamentally the air was the same.

However, looking at the surrounding men's scars and tattoos, this place gave off the heavy smell of outlaws.

「Because, Greifer is the one most used to playing out. Even in the worst case that some kind of trouble occurs, it feels like the punishment will turn lighter because you are a Seven Dragon Paladin.」

「.....Can I go home? Or rather, I'm going back yeah?」

Greifer's chair made a sound *gata*- from him standing up, but Coral swiftly pulled down Greifer's hand and he smiled.

「It's fine to stay a bit more right? Remember how I'm staying quiet to Mirmiette-sama about the incident before this too.」

「Haa, just why has someone like this become my aide. Master, alcohol. Give me a strong one if possible.」

When Greifer sat down with a sigh, Coral ordered alcohol for Lux.

Somehow looking at the atmosphere of the two, it felt like it wasn't just once or twice that they were coming to a bar like this.

「.....Or rather, is it okay for us to be here? Won't it be bad if we got found out?」

With the ordered ale before his eyes, Lux was hesitating with an awkward face, it was then, 「It's fine. After all this is a little-known good place where you need an introduction to enter. Now now, try to take a sip.」

Urged by Coral, Lux tilted his beer jockey to his mouth.

It was slightly bitter.

Unique flavor and aroma that was like bread turned into liquid came out from the nose. Heat was welling up from deep inside the throat.

He had been tasting alcohol since his childhood at banquets, but since he came to the Academy he had rarely drank.

Perhaps the modest dinner from the dining hall had already passed through his stomach, because he became tipsy in the blink of an eye before the jockey even became empty.

「Hey, ask him quickly already, Greifer.」

「.....I don't get what's your meaning yeah? What about?」

Greifer was responding to Coral's demand with a dubious face.

「Lux-kun looks like he has a bit of worry, so it's fine right?」

「You ask him! Why do you need to go through me huh!?!」

「Really Greifer, how cold. Is it because you lost to Lux-kun before this? That's not manly you know?」

「.....」

Greifer fell silent with a face that looked displeased from the bottom of his heart. Seeing that made Lux smile wryly.

This kind of unreserved dialogue between fellow man of the same age felt fresh.

In the end, seeing that Greifer wouldn't start talking, Coral put the snack of cheese into his mouth with a sullen look.

「Haa, too bad..... Then Lux-kun. Once again let me say—thank you for today.」

「.....Eh?」

Suddenly Coral said such thing to him.

When Lux was bewildered from not getting what it was about, Coral leaned his body forward suddenly from the seat beside him and he brought his cute face closer.

The face of the androgynous youth was blushing slightly from alcohol, which caused Lux's heart to throb for a moment.

「It's about Buzzheim. Sorry, we allowed him to obstruct you all many times and caused discomfort to your group. Even like that, the guy is the son of a big shot in the Vanheim Principality. Even we cannot carelessly lay our hands on him.」

The smile from before vanished and Coral murmured with a somber expression.

Lux who saw that smiled wryly with a 'fuh' while,

「Don't worry about it. I also have heard about what the Old Empire did to the other countries, so something like that won't just go away immediately.」

「I feel a bit at ease that you are saying that but—as expected, I think it's not a good thing to bring in resentment into unrelated events. Right, Greifer?」

「Oi Coral.Have you brought me here to harass me?」

Coral smiled mischievously. Greifer clicked his tongue.

Previously, Lux's impression was that the diligent Coral was supporting the audacious Greifer, but it seemed these two's relation was taking balance like this.

「But, if you are worrying about the past, then I think it will be better if you ask Greifer. He too is a Seven Dragon Paladin right now, but in the past he had a lot of difficulty.」

「Difficulty?」

When Lux's interest was attracted and he asked, Greifer sighed a bit.

「Then, I'll leave my seat for a bit, so the two of you can talk cordially with

each other okay?」

Coral waved his hand to Lux and Greifer and then he left the bar right away, vanishing into the town at night.

「.....」

Silence flowed for a few seconds.

The awkward air that was starting to flow between the two caused Lux to try to say something, it was then, 「I'll say this first but, it's not like I got anything to talk yeah. I'm also ain't planning to get buddy-buddy with a guy of another country.」

Lux hung his head down from that curt rejection.

(As I thought, am I being hated.....)

Lux was depressed inside while silently tilting his beer jockey into his mouth.

While he was getting even more drunk and looked dazed, the bearded master called out from the counter.

「Ou lad. How about taking some snacks on the side? You'll get drunk quickly if you only drink beer.」

「Err, is there something that you recommend—」

「What about this? You'll get a kick eating it yeah?」

The master grinned widely while pointing at a part of the menu.

「Then, please give me—, eh?」

When Lux was about to nod, Greifer's arm quickly crossed in front of Lux's eye.

The movement of the youth who should have been looking aside until now gave Lux a shock and he stiffened.

「Master, cancel that one just now. In exchange give us my usual.」

「Wai-!? Oi! I'm asking this lad here for his order—」

「Aa, I'm fine with that!」

It looked like it would become a quarrel, so Lux followed what Greifer said.

The master backed down grumpily and in the end he allowed the change of order.

「Err, the food I was going to order just now, was it no good?」

「You, are you a glutton unlike your appearance?」

Greifer kept his gaze averted while responding curtly to Lux's question.

「No, I'm not like that though.....」

「Then give it up, that menu is a whole roast with a lot of fat meat. The spices are also strong. It ain't something you eat with a tired body after the exam. That master is greedy, so he was only trying to take an order for expensive food.」

「.....I, is that so.」

While they were having that talk, the food Greifer ordered arrived.

It was a half-solid soup with bread and vegetable boiled until simmering.

「De, delicious. What's this taste, I might really like it—」

The simple taste of the soup was healing his tired body gently.

(Could it be, he is being considerate of me?)

Greifer was showing a slovenly attitude like usual, but as expected it seemed he was a youth that was good at looking after someone.

Lux didn't know it at the All-Dragon Battle, but it seemed that Greifer's personality was really interesting.

「Then, I'll cut loose. Oooi, old man, bring more alcohol here. The strong one.」

「Wait, it's no good if you drink too much you know!? We are still not adults—!」

「Haa? It's fine. In its own way it will be a challenge of how to return back in a state of complete drunkenness.」

「.....That, rather than a challenge, it's just a simple recklessness isn't it?」

「Weell, I cannot deny that, but that's how my disposition is.」

Greifer turned his eyes that were unfocused from tipsiness to empty air and he leaked out a small sigh.

「Originally I was a noble young master, but when my father, a military officer was caught by the Old Empire—he was indicted as a traitor to this country. The top brass of Vanheim also believed it seriously, my house was ruined and my family scattered. I too was living in the back alley since I was little. In order to earn money or eat food, I always gotta get reckless, if not I wouldn't be able to keep living, yeah.」

「——」

「It's the same regarding Drag-Rides. At first I was told that I got no aptitude and talent, but everyday I continued to use it until I almost fainted or vomited blood. But, one day I suddenly became able to use it skillfully, and I caught our princess's eyes.」

His doctrine, 『reckless challenge』 seemed to have the meaning that he would be unable to survive without constantly acting recklessly as though gambling.

For the cause to be the Old Empire made Lux feel complicated.

「Well, I ain't got any direct resentment to you, but the case about my father is smoldering inside me. I might wanted to settle it, at least once.」

「Settle.....?」

When Lux asked back by repeating that word, Greifer huffed and showed a smile that was filled with jest.

「.....Yeah, it ain't gonna end with everything staying half-baked. Whether it ends in failure or success—I wanted to settle the feeling and thinking that were in me until now. Surely, that's all there is to it.」

「.....」

「Well, even that ended in total failure though, but I accept it more or less. Weeell, when I challenge you next time, I'm gonna win for sure then.」

Greifer muttered that with a fearless grin.

Lux smiled wryly with a troubled look. Even so he didn't feel bad from that.

(Settling one's own wish and thinking, huh.....)

The night's tumult that was enveloped with the faint light of the lamp, which

felt somewhat detached from reality.

The words that Greifer told to Lux from the side were permeating inside his chest.

Part 10

—At the same time.

In another bar in the urban area of Ruin's Gear, the Drag-Knights of the New Kingdom's army were drowning their worry in drink.

「.....Sheesh, I got awful grades. That's why I didn't want to do something like an exam in an unfamiliar country.」

「Exactly. Besides, the young ladies of the Academy are really motivated. If it's only them who get promoted, we are going to become the laughingstock.」

Several men were gathered at the corner of the cramped bar.

The male officers who belonged to the army accompanying the students to take the exam together this time—these men were a few names among them. They were sick of how hopeless their prospects were in the Class Promotion Exams and they grumbled to clear up their resentment.

Among them, there were also the aristocrat officers who once got beaten up by Celis and then came to the Academy picking a fight for clearing up their resentment.

「In the first place, we who got low aptitudes for Drag-Rides have limited time even for training. We're handicapped no matter what. Aa, I'm beaten.」

One of the men emptied his glass in one gulp and sighed exaggeratedly.

Dilwy who had the commanding role this time was staring at that sight quietly while drinking his beer.

「.....」

Originally, if it was the him with a serious personality, this was a night playing that he ought to stop, but he instead accompanied the young men.

Inside his eyes that had the color of hollowness vaguely emerging, there was

no disappointment that the Class Promotion Exam didn't go well or disdain towards these depraved officers bunch.

Just, his right wrist that was holding the glass with some beer remaining in it.

His gaze was often attracted to the deep scar remaining there.

He made a name for himself as a trueborn warrior even amidst the Old Empire and for a time he almost climbed up until EX Class. But Dilwy's arm was wounded by a certain incident and he became unable to move properly.

「Nothing goes my way.....」

Dilwy wasn't born with a knight's pedigree, his talent with the sword was average.

Dilwy wasn't blessed with physique or stamina, but he obtained the power of a Drag-Ride that was starting to appear at that time and he ran up the royal road as a knight.

Until he bore this wound in that land, the Blackend Kingdom—

Because sometimes he was distracted by the ache of that scar, he was relying on alcohol like this.

「.....Captain, Captain Dilwy?」

「Nn, aah..... Is it the bill?」

The one who called out to him was a young officer who had just graduated from military school.

「No, just want to talk. This country—no, recently in various countries there is a rumor going around, does captain know about it? It's about a secret medicine found in the Ruins, called Elixir.」

「—My bad but I'm not really knowledgeable about medicine. Also, I haven't got near a Ruin for some time.」

「I'm also not that detailed about it but, it seems that it's a medicine that increases the aptitude for a Drag-Ride.」

「.....Is that so? That sounds interesting. I want to get a look at it by all means.」

He had heard about that type of suspicious secret medicine many times since the Ruins and Drag-Rides were discovered.

It was a topic that would make the male officers who blamed their lack of strength on their low aptitude for Drag-Rides, but Dilwy couldn't get along with that story.

「Right? If it's really true that a secret medicine was discovered from a Ruin, it's something that I want to be shared with us by all means. I heard that there is a guy selling it, and his figure was seen at the back alley around here.」

「.....Strange. It shouldn't be something that the underlings could easily get though.」

「What's wrong captain?」

The rookie soldier felt the presence of Dilwy that was suddenly making a forbidding look which caused him to slightly wake up from his drunkenness.

「No, nothing. I remembered that I have urgent business, so I'll return early, the drink here is on me. You guys enjoy yourselves slowly tonight.」

Dilwy only said that and left the bar without waiting for a reply.

Like that he headed to the back alley. There a silhouette could be seen inside the darkness.

「And—do you have any business with us?」

Dilwy was making a calm smile while his hand touched the Sword Device on his waist.

It was most difficult to summon a Drag-Ride in a confined blind alley.

Therefore Dilwy was putting up his guard against the robed man before him while calling out in order to prevent the man from doing anything.

「I heard about the rumor even in the New Kingdom. Dragon Marauder—the warmonger Drag-Knights who recently became famous, they are secretly maneuvering in various places. Could it be, you are also someone of that kind?」

「.....」

The robed man didn't stir at all hearing Dilwy's words.

There was only a calm smile emerging on the robed man's face.

「You have been following behind us since before we entered this bar haven't you? I don't know what is your objective, but if you cannot answer—I'll have to arrest you.」

Dilwy pulled out his Sword Device with no question asked.

And then, he closed in with one breath and put strength into his toes in order to thrust his sword, in that instant—

「Stop it, are you planning to swing a sword with that injured right arm?」

When Dilwy stiffened from the surprise of those words, the man's figure vanished from before his eyes.

「-.....!?」

The alley in front of him was completely a dead end, there wasn't even any cover for hiding.

「—Don't move. And then, stop with the foolish drama. Though that must be an act to protect yourself huh.」

The voice that talked calmly to him could be heard from behind.

Dilwy kept readying his unsheathed sword while he was stiffened and unable to move.

「.....」

The robed man's breathing could be heard from behind such Dilwy.

「—That's a nice Sword Device. It's maintained properly. I can see how much you are sending your heart into that Drag-Ride in these few years where you lost your right hand's freedom. But right now you are filled with despair. You lost everything, you're defeated. Even so you don't throw away hope and struggle. Even if you have to sell over your pride—」

「.....What are, you saying?」

Dilwy somehow made only that reply while his back was still turned towards the man.

「Kukuku, don't act brave. I'll grant your wish earlier than those guys. What

can save the current you isn't something like a Divine Drag-Ride or anything. The power that you once possessed. I'll grant you the only method to take that back.」

It was a sweet voice that permeated directly into the skull.

At that moment when the border between reality and dream melted and the world turned hollow, the robed man pulled out a knife.

「Wh, at—that's?」

It was a bizarre knife.

Its shape was common, but the handle was lacquered jet black.

And then an unfathomable pattern emerged on the blade, emitting strange light of seven colors.

From a glance he thought that it was a kind of Sword Device, but something was different.

「Are you curious about this? You see—this was once a seed of war.」

「.....What?」

「In the distant past. No, it's a time that is equal to an instant from my point of view, but humans classified humans into several races.」

The robed man apathetically whispered while staring at empty air.

「There was a clan of influential people who obtained a power to rule the world. Among them a secret medicine that was able to transcend humanity was created. The act of implanting a part of it into a human was called Baptism. The people who received Baptism would obtain ability that was hidden inside themselves and stood at height, reigning over as rulers.」

「.....」

「But, before long the oppressed people wished for a world without unreasonable rule, and a war that span over a long time began. —That was the beginning of everything. The beginning of this shackled world that is like hell, continuing infinitely.」

「What are you saying—? You are, just what.....」

「Rest assured, your wish will be fulfilled..... that's what I'm talking about.」

- Stab*

A sharp pain ran through Dilwy's right wrist. Heat burst out.

The knife the robed man was holding emitted strange seven colors, sucking Dilwy's blood.

「U—GUAAaAAH!?!」

His brain burned.

The blood in his whole body felt like boiling at the same time with the intense pain. Dilwy groaned.

He couldn't even breath. After a few seconds that felt like eternity passed, the pain in his wrist vanished.

「—Let's meet again, oh the defeated wishing to become hero. After all, you still have that qualification.」

When Dilwy noticed, the robed man was vanishing.

The bluish white moonlight peeking from between the clouds was illuminating the alley silently.

Only the stone paving that was soaked with fresh blood and the knife emitting light of seven colors were remaining there.

Part 11

「Haa.....」

After the Class Promotion Exam was over, Airi finished taking a bath together with the Triad. She was looking up alone at the ceiling inside the shared room that was allotted to her.

Although it was an exam that was full of trouble, everyone was safe. But Sharis, Tillfur, and then even Noct who were obstructed by Buzzheim met painful experiences.

The three were behaving stout-heartedly, but they couldn't hide their discouraged mood fully.

Even though Airi understood that, but she was unable to be considerate towards the three. She hated herself who was like that.

「I want to become their strength. But—」

Right now, even Airi herself didn't have any leeway.

A part of an ancient document that was carried out from the deepest part of a Ruin.

It was a proof that showed the ties between the Old Empire, and the race that was called as LordCreator who seemed to exist in the Ruins. Airi was putting a distance from everyone, even with her best friend Noct so that it wouldn't be found out.

But, when the time comes that the truth came to light, Airi wondered what she should do.

She couldn't find the answer no matter how much she thought.

「Nii-san, we are—」

When she was letting out a sigh of who knew how many times, a knocking

sound could be heard from the door.

「.....Ah, welcome back—Noct」

Of course, she couldn't forget to hide the ancient document.

But, her attention was taken by her hurry in hiding it that she opened the door without even checking.

「-.....!？」

Airi was speechless at the visit of the very unexpected character.

A few hours ago, her big brother Lux was cornered in the Class Promotion Exam. By this person here—the Blue Tyrant, Singlen Shelbrit.

He was wearing a blue coat with excess sleeves and a pilot suit furnished with metal plates that was called armor suit. And then under his hood, he was wearing a strange smile that didn't reach his eye.

「Wha, wha.....!？」

「How do you do lady, I have something to talk with you for a bit—is it okay?」

In response to the dispassionate words, Airi was backing away in a fluster.

「The, there is no way it's okay right!? Just where do you think you are!」

With her frozen thought and her tense expression, it was the best she could do to reply like that for the time being.

「Don't speak loudly like that. What a lady who lacks in manners. With that kind of big brother, perhaps it's only natural that his little sister is like this, good grief.」

But, Singlen shrugged his shoulders in response as though he had no ill will at all.

「While it might be rude, but it's Sir Singlen who is lacking in prudence! This is the lodging for females. What kind of business do you have at this time?」

Airi was purposefully acting angrier than necessary.

She was doing that to encourage herself so that she wouldn't get dragged away by this Blue Tyrant's pace.

「I faced your big brother in the exam. I'm concerned whether he is alright. I only came here thinking that I'll ask about his condition. Be grateful.」

「That's, why did you come to the place of me, his little sister then.....?
—Wait, please don't come in as you please!」

「It's dreary, just as typical of an army's lodging huh. Lack of discrimination is a good thing.」

Singlen briskly entered inside and sat down heavily on the chair inside the room.

Airi was enveloped in bewilderment, even so she shortly stood in front of the desk.

「.....I'll call other people you know?」

「You're bad at lying former princess. It's you who will be troubled if you call someone right?」

「——」

Airi's expression froze just for a moment. Singlen didn't miss that.

「When a human is placed in a dilemma, they will stand in front of the thing they want to protect the most. And for a young woman at that age, they will mostly stand in front of their bed or their closet. Even though both of those are right nearby, why are you standing in front of your desk that is the farthest?」

「.....」

He hit the bull's eye.

The best Airi could do right now was pretending to be calm and not letting her agitation come out to her face.

Because at the gap of the board that was laid out in the desk's drawer, a part of that ancient document that Airi had never let go from her sight was carefully hidden in the cover of her diary there.

「I have heard the rumors about you, criminal former princess. It seems that you will find any excuse to go along in any Ruin investigation that is few in number. A human that cannot even handle a Drag-Ride and should be nothing

more than a hindrance, why are you behaving like that then?」

‘.....How did he know until that far?’

Airi couldn't speak that question out loud.

If she said it, it felt like he would take advantage of it even more.

「I hear that you are also a survivor of that Old Empire, but it feels like you also have another secret.」

Singlen walked closer towards Airi who was standing in front of her desk.

When her body reflexively stiffened, his feet stopped still.

「Let's enter the main topic, I came here to warn you. The bunches called Dragon Marauder. Those warmonger Drag-Knights are starting to secretly maneuver in various places. They are a gathering of mercenaries who staked their life to snatch the treasure of the Ruins and tear down countries.」

「That's, what about it.....?」

「Those guys are sending spies to every country. It will be dangerous if they know you are hiding the secret of the Ruins. What I want to say is be cautious.」

Singlen only said that before he turned on his heel and moved to leave the room.

「.....No need for worry, because I know nothing of such secret.」

When Airi said that with fortitude, Singlen's shoulders shook slightly.

「The fellows targeting you aren't just Dragon Marauder. Better remember my warning for just in case.」

Singlen said that without turning around and he left.

Right after his presence vanished, Airi closed the door and locked it.

She slowly sat down on the bed and sweat oozed out suddenly from her forehead.

「It's all right..... No one, has seen it yet, so.....」

She took out her diary from the desk, took off the leather binding and flipped the backside.

The text of ancient documents that Airi deciphered was held there without change.

Just as Singlen said, it might be something that she couldn't hide forever.

Even if the origin of their—the Old Empire that perished five years ago was connected to the Lords of the Ruins, nothing could be understood with just the content recorded here.

Then, what was it that she was fearing until that much, Airi questioned herself.

Was it the risk of even more crimes getting piled up on Lux and Airi as criminals?

Was it that they would have to shoulder the responsibility that was being hidden together with the mystery of the Ruins?

「No— what I'm fearing is, surely.....」

That Lux would know about this truth.

And then, her big brother who had obtained this current meager happiness would get dragged into this unknown fate, with the situation near him changed drastically, and he would leave to a place where Airi's hand couldn't reach. That was her fear.

Losing her beloved family Lux was what she feared the most.

「Nii-san. Just what, should I.....」

The words that were whispered with a small voice so that no one could hear, reached the ears of a man standing alone outside the door.

Episode 4 – Second Ruin 『Maze』(Dungeon)

Part 1

At the early morning next day.

Lux woke up early before the sunrise and then he headed toward the practice ground inside the military ground.

He had took confirmation from Coral who was in the same room with him that it was permitted to use the place. The place was empty as he expected, perhaps the factor that it was right after the exam also played a part of it.

“Now, then.....”

After changing into his pilot suit, he wore Wyvern on his body and carried out basic operation as replacement for warming up.

And then he released the control of tuning just like how Lisha taught him.

“-.....!?”

Several images of light were floating around him, with ancient letter, symbol, and graphic reflected in them.

Originally it was a function that was literally to tune things like the Drag-Ride's output, armament, and so on. Usually this function wasn't used while fighting, but now he was deliberately starting up while keeping the function activated.

(As I thought, controlling Drag-Ride in tuning mode is, considerably difficult.....) One could concentrate better if information and options were limited to a certain degree.

The control of Drag-Ride was already complicated and numerous in the best

of time. Adding the fiddling of even its output value in the middle of battle gave a degree of difficult that was nearly ill-advised.

“However—.....just a bit more”

After taking a deep breath and fired himself up, Lux repeated basic action while keeping that state on.

After around an hour passed with some light rest in between, his stamina finally reached the bottom and he fell on his knee on the ground.

“—Haa, haa.....”

He was breathing hard with his shoulders heaving while crouching on the spot. Then suddenly he heard footsteps from behind him.

The moment Lux stood up to turn around, a towel was dropped on his head.

“.....Wah!?”

Lux’s sight was plunged into darkness and he panicked.

When he took the soft white towel, there was a familiar face there.

“Morning, Lu-chan.”

“Ah.....”

It was a lovely face that was expressionless and absentminded with trace of childishness remaining in it.

Philuffy in pilot suit appearance was standing there.

Different from usual, her hair was tied into a short ponytail. That appearance looked fresh and surprising.

“Phi, Phi-chan. Why are you here—?”

“I’m also always, doing morning training. Then, I heard Lu-chan’s voice, from here.”

After saying that with a dispassionate tone, Philuffy slowly took back the towel.

“Wai-, what are you doing Phi-chan!?”

“You will catch cold, if you don’t properly wipe the sweat, you know?”

Philuffy was wiping Lux's sweat using the towel with serious face and a tone that sounded a bit chiding.

But, it was embarrassing to have a girl that was his childhood friend to do that much for him, so Lux was flustered.

"I, I'm fine you know!? I, it's only this much. I can wipe myself alone so—!"

There was no people around, but Lux turned his head left and right to check.

"It's okay, I'm finished already."

Philuffy finished her work while he was doing that and she put the towel on Lux's shoulder.

Like that she was then staring very still at Lux with her pure eyes.

"-.....!?"

Perhaps because she had just been training, Philuffy's skin and face were slightly flushed, and there was a faint scent of sweat from her. They made Lux's heart throbbed fast.

Compared to her childhood, her breasts, her thighs, and other places had grown into an amazing feminine body. He thought of that once more while looking at her face from nearby.

"Wha, what's wrong? Is there something on my face—"

"Ei"

"Waah!?"

Lux's body half rotated just from Philuffy lightly jerking his arm.

In the blink of eye he was made to turn his back on her and he felt bewildered once more.

"Wha, what are you doing Phi-chan!? My sweat is already—"

Philuffy's body clung closely on the back of the flustered Lux. Then she whispered to him with indifferent tone.

"Checking a bit. Whether your body, is hurt."

"Yo, you don't need to do that, I'm really not tired! —Uwah!?"

Honestly speaking, he was on tenterhooks because Philuffy's large breasts were touching his back.

When Lux twisted his body to shake her off, his foot got entangled and they fell down together.

"Aa....."

Lux leaked out a voice after falling.

When his hand reflexively moved to stand up, there was Philuffy's body right below him.

"So, sorry-.....!]

The large breasts that didn't lose shape even when she was lying down face up flew into his sight, causing Lux's head to boil up.

Philuffy who was expressionless as usual kept staring at Lux and she suddenly moved her lips.

"It's okay, to not endure you know?"

Philuffy's question that was said with her usual serious face made Lux turned stiff.

The warmth and softness of Philuffy's body that was glued to him.

After getting conscious of that, Lux's heart was pounding hard like an alarm bell, his consciousness turned blank for a moment.

"Because Lu-chan, you look like you are brooding over something."

"—Eh?"

After Lux whispered toward those words that suddenly came at him, Philuffy showed a faint smile.

"Since the past, Lu-chan would immediately endure. You would hide your true feeling."

"....."

That voice sounded somewhat nostalgic.

And yet it also sounded somewhat lonely. Philuffy formed her words with

such voice.

“I’m happy, that you are doing your best for our sake, but—. It’s fine, to be more honest with your own feeling, you know?”

“.....Such, thing”

‘Isn’t true’. For some reason he became unable to say that when he looked at Philuffy’s straightforward gaze.

- GOOOON*. Suddenly the sound of large bell that informed the time rang at the area.

“Oh....., I need to return to my room soon—”

“Right. Later, Lu-chan.”

They stood up, and then after exchanging only those words, Lux parted with Philuffy and returned to his room.

The straightforward words of his childhood friend caused a mysterious feeling to sprout inside him.

Part 2

There was an emergency call. Almost all the officers as well as the officer cadet who were the examinees of Class Promotion Exam were gathered on the Canopy at the upper part of Ruin's Gear's center.

The Drag-Knights were lined up. In front of them was a stage, where the principality's princess, Milmiette, and the man who was the mayor of Ruin's Gear were standing side by side.

"Everyone—first, thank you for your hard work in the Class Promotion Exam this time. The joint exam with New Kingdom Atismata that was being held for the first time has also ended safely, I believe that it will give a result where we can hope for even better development."

Milmiette first showed a smile that was like a flower and greeted formally.

But, in contrast with those words, it was as though the atmosphere didn't feel relaxed.

"Originally we will break up with this. But, just as everyone of the New Kingdom Atismata also knows, recently the appearance rate and the atrocity of the Abyss from Ruin are gaining strength. The second Ruin, the Dungeon existing underground this Ruin's Gear is also not an exception."

- Murmur*. The gathered Drag-Rides looked at each other's face after hearing those words.

"Originally, the number of Abyss appearing from Dungeon is fixed, but that number will overflow if it's left alone for a long period, and they will climb up from the door at the bottom. Originally this kind of situation happen once every few months, but regardless of the frequency of subjugation that we has increased in this Ruin, the situation is that the Abysses are going to flood out."

".....!?"

The female students who came from Academy and the military officers gulped.

“Perhaps everyone can already imagine it after I talk this far, but I wish to ask the cooperation of everyone from the new kingdom, in exterminating those Abysses that has been increasing too many inside the Dungeon.”

After she was speaking that far, the mayor stood on the stage and spoke out the outline of the mission.

The Dungeon that was existing underground the Ruin’s Gear.

The underground was divided into five levels in total. In this mission they would descend down those levels, defeated as many Abyss as possible, and decreased their number.

However, in the mission this time, they would only step in until the second level.

The reason was because there were few cases where powerful Abyss appeared in low level.

“Of course, originally there is no merit in this talk for the ladies and gentlemen of New Kingdom Atismata. Naturally we are planning to pay the compensation for your effort, but we are thinking to grant one more reward for it.”

After the grey haired mayor with moustache stepped down, Milmiette continued the talk once more.

“The result that everyone raised in this suppression mission will be treated as a special supplementary exam of this time’s Class Promotion Exam, and the score will be added into the exam’s evaluation.”

“.....Ooh!?”

The dazzling smile and words of Milmiette caused the depressed officers to lift their face.

“Of course, cooperation with every officers and defeating many Abyss safely will be evaluated even higher. After all if one neglected to cooperate in their hurry for achievement, they will also fall behind in the real battle. Inside the

Ruin, the Drag-Knights of our country who are serving as examiner will take the lead. It will be our happiness if those with spare energy can come forward and cooperate in this by all means.”

Milmiette bowed, then a commotion that somewhat resembled a cheer rose.

“Fuu. The princess of this country can say a good thing too huh.”

Tillfur who was beside Lux by chance showed a small smile after hearing that.

At the exam this time, she seemed to be lacking in confidence what’s with the obstruction in the middle of it too, so she must be relieved inside her heart for this chance.

The subjugation would be done by team of three or four people. Fundamentally entering into the third level was forbidden.

It seemed that this judgment came from the thinking that although the Dungeon was vast and deep, but because the passage itself wasn’t that wide, moving in large group would be obstructive.

This suppression mission would be performed for around three hours.

Of course, continuously operating Drag-Ride through all that time would be impossible, so they would take rest inside the Dungeon, or outside.

Everyone gathered comrades and prepared, then at the lobby they would apply for participation as team. After that they would gather under the Canopy—in front of the spiraling corridor that continued toward the Gate underground, and they would enter in order from the team who got the permission first.

“It seems that the content of the supplement exam this time is advantageous for us whose main strength is cooperation.”

Sharis of Triad who was listening to the talk from right nearby called out like that to her comrades Tillfur and Noct.

Right at that timing, Noct who was there met Lux’s eyes.

“Ah.....”

The other day they parted without him unable to say anything to her. Lux was

troubled about how he should greet her.

(What should I say, that can assure her.....?)

While he was hesitating in front of her with such thinking—,

“Good morning Lux-san. Were you hurt from the exam yesterday?”

“Ah, I, I’m fine. I’m completely—”

Unexpectedly it was Noct herself who broached the topic about the exam that he thought would be hard to talk with her.

“Is that so, I was a bit worried.”

“Eh.....?”

Lux tilted his head in puzzlement. Noct spoke with her usual calm expression.

“Yes. We are talking about Lux-san who is kind to girl here, so you will surely think about various methods in order to console me who might be feeling down. I was worried whether you would be lacking in sleep because of that.”

“N, no, it’s not like I was thinking that—”

Noct’s exactly right guess caused Lux to object with red face.

“Is that so, that’s unfortunate. It doesn’t matter that I am the roommate of your little sister, the matter about me won’t really weigh in your mind that much isn’t it?”

“Tha, that’s not true. That, I was worried—about the matter of all of you the Triad.”

Noct looked at Lux with contemptuous eyes when he said that with an earnest tone.

“Yes. As expected you were thinking about that kind of thing weren’t you? Surely it’s a method of touching our body to console—”

“Just what kind of person Noct think I am!?”

When Lux retorted in panic, Noct’s expression suddenly loosened.

“I’m glad. Because I thought that Lux-san would be troubled, that you were unable to help me in the exam the other day.”

“I was just concerned about you, but instead I made you worried!?”

“Yes. Being considerate to the surrounding is the duty of Leaflet family that came from the lineage of servant. I still cannot lose against Lux-san.”

The girl who was his junior smiled slightly at the exhausted Lux and she said that to him.

“Okay, oka—y. Then we will prepare as well. Lux-chi too, let’s meet again inside the Ruin.”

As soon as the mood relaxed, Tillfur came rushing in.

“Ah, that—can you allow me to join the Triad’s team together too?”

「.....」

Hearing this, the Triad members were speechless for a moment with their eyes snapped wide open.

“E, eh.....? Is it, no good.....?”

Seeing Lux being troubled, Sharis grabbed Lux’s head into her underarm.

“Wah.....!?”

Due to the posture, Lux’s face hit Sharis’s chest. His face suddenly heated up.

Her body was toned, with the sensation of soft breast pressed on him.

And from her body floated her trademark the rose fragrance that tickled Lux’s nose alluringly.

“Fuh...so even that innocent Lux has become very proactive. You truly want to make all three of us fall for you, don’t you?”

Sharis said that jokingly with a mischievous smile.

“Wa ha haa, Lux-chi is so bold. As expected a boy is really different eh—”

“Yes, Lux-san too is finally developing a great interest in girls. I judged that it’s my obligation to report this to Airi.”

“I, I said it’s not true!? I don’t have that kind of strange ulterior motive, I just—”

Even Tillfur and Noct got into the joke and Lux became even more panicked, it

was then, “We truly understand. Thank you for worrying about us.”

Sharis released Lux from under her arm, and gently placed her finger along his chest.

“But, only this time some of us want to try things. So we are going to rely on you at another chance. For now, please go to the other girls who are waiting for you.”

“Okay..... Then everyone, be careful.”

With some hesitation, Lux agreed and slowly left.

After he talked with Lisha and others about the grouping, Lux returned to the lodging house for once to see Airi’s face.

Part 3

“Fuh, it somehow went well. Although we originally agreed to this, you do not have any regrets, Tillfur, Noct?”

Sharis was seeing off Lux’s back while speaking to her two compatriots.

“Yes, we hope that we don’t add to Lux-san’s burdens by more than this.”

“Actually, I was really happy though..... He is properly worrying about us too—”

With a joyful and lonely expression, Tillfur sighed.

While Airi was alone in her dorm room last night, the Triad girls made some plans in advance.

In order to help Lux, the three decided to distance themselves instead from him.

Although it was because of Buzzheim’s evil design and added with a coincidence, it still resulted in them dragging down Lux at the Class Promotion Exam.

If they who didn’t even have the strength to skillfully use Divine Drag-Ride were near Lux, they would become a hindrance to him.

The words that Singlen said at the exam yesterday stabbed the chest of the Triad.

To re-evaluate their strength again from the beginning, the three decided not to request Lux’s assistance and fought by themselves.

“But, I might have done something bad towards Tilfur. I stole away the time where you can be together with him.”

Sharis spoke teasingly.

“Wai-.....!? Sharis yourself, even though just now you pushed your breast on

Lux-chi!”

“Yes, I think that’s quite bold of Sharis.In fact, you like Lux-san, correct?”

“—Fuh. I was just giving him a bit of nice memory in my own way as my feeling of gratitude. No, though it’s not a mistake that I’m pleased with him.”

image

“Is that really true～ ? Sharis, even though she has been putting act as a big sis but she is actually pure, so she is unexpectedly weak against straight advance though~,and she like younger one too.”

“Yes, although we are childhood friends, this is the first time I have seen you do this type of thing towards a man.”

“... We, well, time to get back to the topic on hand.”

Sharis’s face was slightly reddening from Tillfur’s mischievous laugh and Noct’s fixed stare. She then made a forced cough.

“Our goal is to accomplish this by our own strength. —Now, let’s go and do what we can with our all.”

Sharis repeated the instructions from the start. The other two nodded understandingly.

The three of them stepped forth toward the passage of Drag-Ride hangar that was borrowed from Ruin’s Gear

Part 4

“Airi, are you in there?”

After knocking gently on the door and hearing a “Come in,” Lux entered the room.

Exuding her usual cold atmosphere, Airi sat at her desk reading.

“Is something the matter, Nii-san? You are going to join the aforementioned suppression mission aren’t you? Isn’t it better to quickly prepare?”

“Ahaha……. No, there is something that troubled me a bit.”

Saying that, he talked about how after he was rejected from accompanying the Triad, he went to where Lisha and others were.

Lux was thinking to group with Lisha, Krulcifer, Philuffy, or Celis who he got along well with and belonged to Syvalles together, but Instructor Raigree who was there told him that he was forbidden to accompany them.

The instructor said,

“On the surface the task is officially to destroy the Abyss, but it is also a supplement exam to test the teamwork in facing the Abyss. You all the user of Divine Drag-Ride, don’t group among yourselves. Split up and devote yourself in supporting the other students.”

It was like that.

Now that he was told that, it was the natural decision.

Lisha and others, the four of them were on another level of strength that was nearly EX Class and had a high chance of passing the exam, thus it would be unnecessary for them to force themselves to achieve victories in the campaign.

Also, the second ruin [Dungeon] is very deep.

It was better that the members of [Syvalles] who had experience going to the

Ruins before to be split accordingly to support the other cadets.

That was how they are told.

“Even though I’m thinking of supporting Lux with the Drag-Ride that I’ve newly created at great pains.....”

After the warning, Lisha became upset.

“I understand what you are saying, and it’s the correct reasoning. But I still feel a little dissatisfied emotionally.”

Krulcifer showed a smile with hidden meaning while agreeing.

“It’s unfortunate..... Even though, I’ve been carrying the snack for Lu-chan’s share too.”

“.....Ahh, nn. Please bring it for me at the next chance. This time Phi-chan can eat them all yourself.”

Lux showed a wry smile while comforting his usually expressionless childhood friend.

“Even though I wanted to peel the orange for you.”

“You really don’t need to do that!? Going that far will make me embarrassed okay-!”

After his panicked exclamation, Celis also came to his side.

“It can’t be helped. I originally wanted to use this opportunity to repay Lux for all the times you helped me but—no, Its definitely not that I just want to be with you, okay.”

“Then please at another chance. For today please become the strength for the others.”

Like that he parted with the girls and Lux returned to the lodging house.

“Haa, nii-san is very popular. However, please stop getting intimate with your classmates now while enrolled in the academy. Otherwise, I would feel

ashamed.”

“Wha, what are you saying!? Everyone is just treating me well I’m telling you.”

Airi’s accusation made Lux’s face to redden as he panicked.

Then however, Airi’s sighed deeply as she muttered something quietly while averting her face away from Lux.

“.....Nii-san’s denseness is already at the territory of serious illness after all. As I thought, is the cause because he is dragging along the matter of the past?”

“Eh...?”

“Never mind. It’s not like I want to see someone like the womanizer Nii-san anyway.”

Airi said in exasperation while looking out the window.

“I will wait in the lobby of the Ruin. It seems that the people of Seven Dragon Paladins will also be there, so you don’t need to worry about me.”

“Mm, got it.”

Lux nodded and smiled.

“Airi, other than this, has anything notable happened recently?”

“...Not really.”

Lux smiled wryly when Airi answered with some hesitation.

“Okay, but if anything happens please let me know. Although I may be unreliable, I am still your big brother after all.”

“-.....!?”

The words Lux said made Airi trembled for a moment.

Although Airi immediately returned to her usual calm expressionless, and she showed a faint smile.

“I understand. Good luck, Nii-san.”

“Nn”

After acknowledging this, Lux showed Airi a smile as he left.

A few seconds later, the expression that she forcefully made finally crumbled, and Airi fell onto her bed.

“My uniform will get wrinkled.....”

Such thinking was crossing the back of her mind even while she was unable to bear it.

There was no way she could say it.

For some unknown reason, Singlen was showing an abnormal fixation toward Lux.

It wasn't only the persistent persuasion to join the Seven Dragon Paladins, he may also knew things about Lux's past when at the old empire and even about Lux's eldest brother Fugil.

So—in order to prevent the two from getting even more involved with each other, Airi kept quiet about last night's events.

The Dragon Marauder's spy may have already infiltrated the New Kingdom.

And then, the important nobles of various countries who were financing Dragon Marauder were searching for trigger of war.

If the content of the old document that Airi deciphered was reported to the upper brass of the new kingdom, the history and knowledge about the old empire until now would be overturned and a great chaos would occur, the brunt of it would surely—be pointed at Lux and Airi.

As the final survivors of the Old Empire, and then as criminals, there was the risk that they would be doubted of having ties with the Lord(Creator) of Ruin.

“If it is only me that ends up hurt then it is still fine. But—”

The worst case would be if Airi was taken hostage, and Lux would fall into the grip of the New Kingdom.

Furthermore, there were also people within the consul who desired to take advantage of Lux.

She didn't want to become a burden for his big brother for more than this.

“I, what should I do.....”

At that moment, a knock suddenly came on the door causing Airi to get taken aback and she held her breath.

“Who is it?”

She asked as she placed her diary where the ancient document was hidden in a safe spot on her desk.

“Please do not panic. I am with Wanheim Principality.”

Hearing the sound coming from a young girl, Airi relaxed as she opened the door.

“-.....!? You are—”

“Could you come with me? Miss Airi Arcadia”

The one who appeared along with a few followers was Princess Milmienne.

Part 5

“Now then, what to do from here.”

In order to participate in the suppression mission, obviously he needed to fix his equipment. However he was refused from teaming up with the Triad, and it didn't look like he could accompany Lisha or the others this time.

“Should I try asking the other classmates?”

Lux pondered such thing while opening the door of the lodging room—then,
“Wah.....!?”

“—Eh?”

Someone sitting on the bed was taking off their shirt, rolling the shirt off their arm.

The exposed smooth white-skinned back appeared in front of Lux's field of vision.

“So, sorry-!? I didn't expect someone to be in the middle of changing here—”

Reflexively, Lux closed the door at the sight of the half-naked androgynous youth.

However, after he panickedly yelled that, he noticed something strange.

“Eh.....? Looking closesly, could you be.....Coral?

image

“Oh, ah, um.....that's me. I'm also a boy, so there's no problem here. Come in.”

“Ah, yes, that's right. Then, I'm coming in.....?”

When Lux timidly entered inside, Coral who had already changed into a pilot suit was inside the room.

No matter how androgynous his appearance and body, Coral undoubtedly should be a boy.

And yet, for some reason a slight guilt welled up inside Lux. Even Lux felt it mysterious.

“Um, about that—sorry that I suddenly made such a strange voice.”

Coral apologized with a somewhat shy smile.

“Oh, that’s fine. It was my fault for forgetting to knock—anyways, is Coral also taking part in the mission?”

He did not watch Coral’s fight at the All-Dragon Battle last time, it was understood that given his ability to use EX Wyvern meant that his strength was High Class at the very least.

From the results of the examination, it didn’t look like that Coral necessarily need the extra points, but...

“Well, everyone in my country is basically participating. After all this is our own country.”

“I see.”

Thinking about it, it was really the natural development.

“Sorry to make you accompany us playing out at night last evening. But—did you able to relax a bit from it?”

“.....Thank you. Because of that, I was able to get along slightly with Greifer.”

After hearing Lux’s words, Coral put his hands together.

“That’s good then. Lux is really very kind just as I thought.”

Coral spoke with a voice that was mixed with relieve and delight. Lux smiled wryly to that, saying “No such thing.”

There were the matter of what Singlen said, Airi whose condition was somewhat strange, and the matter of Triad, even so Lux’s feeling had slightly become light.

“Then, this is an opportunity that is hard to come by, do you want to join us in the suppression mission?”

“That, do you mean—”

Lux was bewildered at Coral’s invitation.

“Mm. In the upcoming suppression mission in the Ruin, I hope that you and me, along with Greifer, can be in a team together. Is that okay?”

“-.....!?”

- chiri-*, a sharp pain ran behind Lux’s eyes and static that looked like sandstorm ran at the back of his mind.

(Again.....? Just what is this? This pain—, I have felt it before) Before Lux was able to confirm what made him uneasy, the feeling soon went away.

“.....What’s the matter?”

“Ah, its nothing. I hope that I will not trouble you too much then.”

Although he was hesitant whether he should help the other girls, but they were also encouraged by Instructor Raigree that they assembled team together with their allied country Wanheim Principality.

After Lux gave his answer, he changed out of his uniform into his pilot suit.

“Wah.....!?”

“Wha, what is it...?”

“No, nothing.....Don’t’ worry about me.”

Coral answered with a troubled smile for some reason. Lux thought it strange while he finished his getup.

He was carrying compass, protable food and drinking water in his bag, then they joined with Greifer.

“I don’t really care, but why are you purposefully teaming up with this fellow from another country.....”

“It’s fine right? Greifer doesn’t have many friends anyway.”

Coral retorted at Grefier who was a bit annoyed. Then after they stopped by at the base inside the palace—the lobby, the three of them went towards the entrance to the Dungeon.

After arriving at the bottom of the spiral staircase that was hollow like ant lion larva's pit, the Drag-Knights of both countries were already gathered in large number.

"Lux! If anything happens, call me immediately! I will rush to your aid!"

Hearing Lisha's energetic voice, Lux awkwardly waved.

Although the three of the Triad were also present, for some reason that Buzzheim was also present.

His injuries were tied with bandages, making it hard to imagine how he could operate a Drag-Ride. Moreover, his proctor license should also have been revoked.

It seemed like he was merely there to see off the beginning of the mission as a member of the military. However, he glared at Lux with hound-like eyes like usual.

"....."

"Relax. Buzzheim already doesn't have anything to do with this part of the exam."

Coral, who noticed where Lux's line of sight went, had understood the situation.

However, Greifer muttered peevishly.

".....I wonder? Well, I'll be keeping an eye for you."

"Next team! Number 17, come forward!"

"It's our turn now."

After being called by the proctors, Lux and his comrades walked up.

If the Gigas that came to the new kingdom was excluded, this would be his first time entering the Ruin of another country. Lux was feeling nervous of that while he braced himself.

As Lisha's knight too, it would be the best for Lux raise his Class.

Besides that, in order to protect the city from the magical beasts, he would give his utmost effort.

(But...for what?)

Singlen's words stuck to his mind.

He had decided that he would not hesitate...and yet why was his feeling like this.

"Let's go, Lux-kun."

Coral gently touched Lux's back, indicating Lux to exit. In front of the site, Lux summoned <Wyvern> and pulled out his sword.

"Come, the winged dragon of crest, the symbol of strength. Follow my sword and fly, Wyvern!"

He pressed the button on his hilt and said the chant.

Light particles gathered around him at high speed. His body became covered with streamlined blue armor.

A few seconds later, while standing on the pentagon on the floor that was called the Gate, an orange light gradually rose, giving Lux a feeling of floating on air.

Feeling like their consciousness was separating from the body, the three of them entered the Dungeon.

Part 6

The rooftop of the Palace that was overlooking down on the spiral staircase continuing to the Dungeon—the edge of Canopy.

Singlen, wearing his usual armor suit was lying down on the edge that was made of stone, where a single mistaken step would make him fall down for few dozen mel.

As his eyes followed Lux disappearing in to the Dungeon, he stared lazily back towards the rear of the main troops.

“I have returned, my lord.”

The air behind Singlen slightly rippled.

As if he was covered by a bed sheet, an old knight wearing a white mask and white jacket appeared.

“You are late, Zwei. Did anyone tail you here?”

“There has been no action at all. Are they saving their capability? Or else, perhaps the Dragon Marauder too isn’t planning to make a move carelessly here.”

“Who knows...If I were them, I would not hesitate at this chance. Right now that the danger of Ruin is increasing and each country is hardening their defense, there may not be another chance where they can move this easily if they miss this one.”

“...True.”

The old knight’s husky voice agreed with his master’s opinion.

“Then I’ll order the Knights of White Ridge to stay vigilant. To prepare for the worst case scenario—”

The old knight prepared to leave. Singlen, stabbed the sheath of his Sword

Device onto the ground, elucidating a small thud as it landed.

“Well, hold on a second, Zwei. Although you were an able man since in the past, your decision making is just a bit too premature. We certainly were requested to protect this city. —But, no one will evaluate us highly just from extinguishing a small fire that cannot be seen. Haven’t we experienced that many times in the past, let’s be a little cleverer here. We will make use of our lesson.”

“.....”

Singlen smiled as he said this, exuding a deep, unending darkness.

The old knight suddenly realized the true meaning behind his words.

“...That”

“Catching the big fish requires patience. Keep in mind we will prioritize the Milmiette ojou-sama’s safety first.”

“Yes, sir.”

After this brief response, Zwei disappeared.

Singlen did not care as he looked over the doors of the palace.

“...Fugil, ah. What will your brother do next? I am looking forward to it.”

Singlen’s face held a deep smile.

However, his dark voice was not heard by anyone.

Part 7

“This...is the Dungeon?”

As his body moved past the door, Lux could not help whispering as he witnessed the incredible interior.

Although the Academy’s lectures and pre-mission meeting described what he needed to know, it was still a view beyond his imagination.

“What’s up? Is this your first time entering a Ruin?”

“...its very spectacular.”

In response to Coral, Lux could not say any other words to describe his impression.

However, those were his real feelings.

In Lux’s mind, the Dungeon was supposed to appear as caves.

With cold, dark, inorganic rocks channeling through them.

However, the scenery in front of him surpassed his imagination.

Directly in front of them was an altar-like patio.

Around the patio was a field of flowers.

Above the patio, instead of a blue sky, something like moss that gave off a pale yellow fluorescent light made the area appear just bright enough.

Rather than a cave, it was more like a courtyard with walls surrounding it on every side.

“Here in the middle is the exit to the outside world. There are also places like this far away from where we are with a lake and other scenery, isn’t it interesting?”

As Lux curiously looked around, Coral gave his explanation.

As they approached, the other female students would stop to look in adungeonment.

“Oh, honor student-sama! Our task is to suppress Abyss here yeah? Don’t treat it like a picnic.”

“Greifer is still the same! Our mission should last just a few hours, yet you still get nervous. Or is it that you just want to finish quickly and get back to Princess Milmiette?”

The two of them began to quarrel.

Lux looked at the two with a wry smile as a thought crossed his mind.

“So now...how many levels are we going to raid?”

“According to the records the exploration has only reached until level four. The area looks spacious, but it’s actually quite complicated. After we pass three levels, the amount of powerful Abyss and harsh environment will increase...”

“I see.”

Listening to Coral’s answer, Lux breathed a sigh of relief.

It seemed that in this Ruin, the existence of Automaton that was called Gear Leader hadn’t been confirmed.

Without that Hayes who was called as Lord, the possibility that something happened in Ruin must be low.

“Shall we begin? Although there are only a few Abyss here, don’t let your guard down and take them one by one!”

Lux nodded to Coral’s words, then they too began the Abyss extermination.

Far in the darkness, a scream could be heard.

“That sound, its Hind huh.”

“Even though this creature looks like a deer, it is very ferocious. Be very careful!”

Lux listened to Greifer and Coral’s instructions as he drew his weapon.

The suppression mission began with this team that was formed for the first

time.

Part 8

“Listen to me! Greifer is amazing? I failed so many dishes that I cooked yet he took it as a challenge and ate all of it!”

“...I-Is that so?”

At the same time.

Under the Canopy, deep in the halls of the Dungeon above the door, Princess Milmiette and Airi were there.

Why was she sitting next to the princess of Wanheim Principality?

It seemed that Coral arranged a lot of security to ensure Airi's safety, but having a lot of guards made her nervous.

“Coral is the son of my distant relatives, but because of the death of his parents from illness, he was adopted as my escort. As the assistant of Greifer of the Seven Dragon Paladins, I think that sooner or later his visit to the new kingdom will also increase, please treat him well then.”

“It's no problem. That...If I may say so, could you excuse me for a few minutes?”

“Oh, I'm sorry. I was too preoccupied with talking. I will send a guard to accompany you.”

“I-I'll be fine by myself!”

Princess Milmiette had good intentions, but being surrounded by male officers was troublesome.

(How to say it...this person, she is too pure that it's hard to deal with her.....) Other than that, a lot of eyes and ears around made Airi felt uneasy.

Because of the ancient document that she deciphered was hidden in a parcel in Airi's bag.

She exited the Lobby and brought her feet toward the toilet.

Airi had been very cautious until there.

However, right after she finished her business and exited the building, for a moment she let her guard down.

“—!?”

“Hey!”

A silhouette quietly approached from the shadows.

A man with a cloth covering his face snatched Airi’s bag.

“Thi-Thief! Stop! Please stop-...!”

She was shouting while knowing that it was in vain.

Even though she was hit and knocked down, she stood up quickly and began to give chase. However, she could not catch up.

The man ran towards the cover of building inside the Palace. As if replacing that man, a Wyvern flew out from there while holding the bag and fled down the spiral staircase.

“—Eh!?”

Airi was stopped by the unexpected scene.

If the man flew outside, it would be hard to find him. And yet the man was heading to the bottom of Palace—to the entrance of the Dungeon where there would be no place to escape.

He was a thief, so why would he run towards a place with a dead-end.

Although a lot of Drag-Knights had gathered due to the suppression mission, however, if an outsider went down there he should still get noticed.

Unless this man was originally a Drag-Knight who was a part of the suppression mission and had received the permission to participate —.

“What exactly is going on...?”

The situation was puzzling.

But after thinking about it for a few seconds, the possibility made Airi

tremble.

From between the gaps in the cloth, the thief's face appeared similar to that of one of Buzzheim's men.

"Surely...it can't be..."

At that moment, Airi remembered a scene from last night.

When Singlen visited Airi's room last night, he used words that suggested that Airi was secretly in possession of something that was connected to the Ruin.

「Those guys are sending spy to every country. It will be dangerous if they know you are hiding the secret of Ruin. What I want to say is be cautious.」

What if supposedly Buzzheim overheard this conversation...

"-...!?"

Airi's heart beat furiously, and she felt her consciousness fading.

If the ancient documents were exposed, they would lose the place that they had obtained in the new kingdom.

People will question their relationship with the Lord(Creator), then they would be imprisoned once more, or else—.

(There is no time to hesitate)

Airi rushed back towards the Lobby to inform others of the emergency.

This matter of robbery couldn't be reported to the military officer of Wanheim Principality.

Since there was no evidence that it was one of Buzzheim's people, and it was only Airi's speculation.

She couldn't act against the military officer of another country without solid evidence. And even if for example she had something like that, they would obviously feign ignorance.

That means she couldn't stop Buzzheim through normal means.

"Nii-san, I—..."

Airi hesitated to discuss this with her brother. Airi rushed down the spiral

staircase as though she was being pushed down. As she approached the Gate of the Dungeon, Noct came into her field of vision.

“What’s the matter Airi? Your face doesn’t look good.”

“ ... ”

Tillfur and Sharis of the Triad were also there. Perhaps they had just finished resting and returned here.

However, Lux and Lisha and other members, the users of Divine Drag-Ride were not there.

Perhaps it would be best to seek their assistance first, but there was no time for that .

Buzzheim could not use a Drag-Ride due to his injury, and most of his followers shouldn’t be accompanying him, only a few of them—.

“Noct, there is something I need your help with. Could you please help me?”

When Airi noticed, she had cut to the case.

She said that she wanted to go into the ruins to catch the thief.

Part 9

“Fuu...we did pretty well. And just now our team finished the fourth battle.”

Coral said this with a smile as the firewood crackled.

They were surrounded by rocks on all sides with a thin lawn covering the ground like a blanket.

They were resting in an open space of the northeast part of the Dungeon's first level.

It seemed there were several resting places called Camp scattered throughout the Dungeon.

They were not originally part of the Dungeon but set up one by one by Wanheim Principality as they explored. Next to them, water from the waterfall parted to create a basin around them.

Lux and Coral were resting in shabby tents set up in the vicinity.

“I doubt there is poison in the water, but it's still likely better to not drink it. If we can understand the situation upstream, then our safety will also increase, but there is no guarantee for that.”

“Got it.”

The teapot and water they had at hand came from a part of the food they brought in advance.

Since they were only exploring for a day, there was not a need to bring too many provisions in advance.

“—However, there is no doubt that Lux will be promoted here.”

As Lux sipped his tea, Coral smiled and congratulated him.

Based on the pocket watch they had, there was less than an hour before they needed to return.

They exterminated Abyss following the instructions of the examinees who were here and there and repeated that several times.

While Lux could only use Wyvern to fight, Greifer and Coral were quite strong so the mission went smoothly.

In the main exam, he acted in the way that lowered his evaluation several times, but with this Lux's promotion to Middle Class should be without a problem.

He would continue to uphold his reputation as Lisha's knight.

(Buy why is it I wonder..... Why am I feeling this superficial?)

Lux put down his tea cup and began strolling around the tent in a daze.

There were no more Abyss around and only the sound of quiet water flowing could be heard, but...

"Oi"

"Wah!?"

There was a voice that suddenly came from the side, then a Dagger stabbed the floor in front of him.

When Lux jumped backward in panic, Greifer wearing Cuelebre arrived at his side.

"Don't loiter around as you please. We are resting right now but don't wander too far from the tent."

"Ah, sorry..."

Lux hurriedly apologized. Greifer grunted towards the side.

(Aa, when I thought that our relationship has finally improved slightly...) Greifer's blunt attitude towards Lux made him felt down as he walked back towards the tent, it was then—, "That was dangerous, Greifer! Anyways, you need to explain to him about that!"

"What do you mean?"

The words of Coral who was exiting the tent confused Lux, while Greifer was showing a bothersome face.

“Haah, the Portal(transfer device) is in that direction. Didn’t I explain it before we entered?”

“Oh...”

Lux noticed what Greifer’s intention was.

Inside this Dungeon, other than stair that went underground, there were things called Portal installed at several floors.

The Portal’s shape was simply a group of rocks in a circle that was easy to notice, but because it could only transport things from the upper floor to the lower floors in one-way trip, the team could be in danger of getting separated at the moment they stood at that spot without noticing it.

Lux noticed that while he presented a different attitude on the surface, Greifer was quite concerned about Lux’s safety.

In any case, the man is really quite caring no matter what he said.

“Thank you Greifer. I’ll switch with you to patrol around now.”

Lux said this with a smile, while for some reason Greifer gave an uncomfortable glance to the side.

“I ain’t feeling like drinking tea, so I’ll refrain. We are going to return back soon anyway right? Rather than that—”

Greifer had an indifferent look as always as he stood up wearing his Cuelebre.

“A communication from Dragon Voice came in. There seems to be something strange going on. The men of new kingdom who weren’t too hot at the exam this time—that team seems to raise some abnormal results for this exam.”

“Isn’t that a good thing? With that the possibility the people of new kingdom’s military getting promoted will increase.”

Coral tilted his head while Greifer continued to speak.

“That’s if they are doing it in proper way. According to the proctor, it seems that team took care of about a dozen Abyss or more already.”

“Eh..?”

Upon hearing this, Lux reacted to the conversation for the first time.

Strange.

The New Kingdom's Drag-Knights, with the exception of the captain Dilwy, should be consisting of only Low or Middle Class Drag-Knight.

Of course, that Class in the end was only one indicator of strength, but it was hard to imagine that they would all suddenly show such results inside this unfamiliar Ruin in foreign country.

"Seems that the Abyss on the second level ain't a match for them, thus they went towards the entrance to the third floor. I wonder, what is their trick?"

"....."

As Greifer said these words, a grave expression appeared on Coral's face for the first time.

However, he sighed immediately and returned to his usual demeanor.

"That is concerning, but no rules were broken, so there is no problems."

"If that's so then it's okay. It is still a bit early, but how about we start heading back?"

At Greifer's suggestion, Lux stood up.

But, at that very moment. *Dong!* The Dungeon began shaking vertically.

"Earthquake!?!"

Right after Lux judged like that, the pale yellow light that illuminated the cave began to flash bright red.

"That's!?!"

Lux recalled a past situation in the Ark that was similar with this. He pulled out his Sword Device.

"Someone broke into the third floor!? This is bad, at this rate—the Ruin will enter alert state!"

Coral who saw that also called out his EX Wyvern and equipped it.

"Greifer! I'm going to confirm the situation. You go outside the Dungeon and await instructions from Princess Milmiette."

“Gotcha. Hey, prince, let’s go back to the Palace.”

“Hold on! I am going to go take a look as well!”

Lux requested to accompany him, but Coral calmly shook his head.

“I can’t take you along towards a part of the dungeon that you are not familiar with. Although you are concerned about the officers of the new kingdom, please bear with it for now.”

Saying that, Coral glided out while driving EX Wyvern.

He traveled through the dungeon and quickly disappeared from the field of vision in the blink of an eye.

Part 10

“...w-what is this shaking! What is happening!?”

“I-It’s not our fault!? Although we accidentally chased the Abyss towards the third floor, just because of that, the Ruin become like this...!”

“Captain Dilwy! Did you see!? Should we retreat...”

It was a team that was composed of only male officers.

The squad captain, Dilwy and three Drag-Knights of the new kingdom military. They were panicked at the sudden change in situation and showed the weak-kneed expression that was exactly opposite with until now when they were defeating a lot of Abysses.

Their steady advance until now was solely thanks to Dilwy, while the other three were only given the leftover. There was no sense of duty or dignity as knight in that.

“—Haah”

Dilwy raised a smile of mockery towards them.

His old wound had healed. His right arm now had strange black pattern on its surface. That arm was holding a knife that was left behind by the robed man last night.

No, not so much as healed, but it was even stronger than before.

“The seed of war huh. I see, so that is how it was...”

“Cap-Captain Dilwy! Let’s retreat quickly”

“Aah, it is already that time huh...then, let’s have a farewell soon.”

The men in his squad let out a sigh of relief hearing Dilwy’s words.

No one there noticed how Dilwy was like a completely different person from

his normal demeanor.

Part 11

“This sound, what happened—!?”

Equipped with her Wyvern, Sharis was surprised and wondering what was happening?

The Triad and Airi were searching for Buzzheim on the second floor when the sudden chaos ensued.

Perhaps it was time to head back, there were no signs of other Drag-Knights around them.

“Isn’t this bad!? How come this feels like the last time in the Ark?”

“Yes, I judge that the possibility is high. But according to the Radar, it will still take a little more until we catch up with Buzzheim and others who seem to be the robbery culprit, about 70 mel ahead—”

“....”

Airi bit her lips with a complex expression while being held by Noct’s Drake.

They heard explanation about the Dungeon’s alert state when they received instruction regarding this suppression mission.

About five minutes after the color inside Ruin changed, the stairs connecting the third floor and the second floor would be blocked. And there was danger that many Abyss would appear.

That ancient document absolutely had to be taken back.

—However, she also couldn’t expose the Triad to even more danger than this because of her selfishness.

“...As long as we have my Drake, we will be able to communicate within the Ruin using Dragon Voice. There’s about 50 mel left till we get to the stair connecting to the third level. They should be there.”

Noct said this in response to seeing Airi's troubled face.

Sharis also spoke to the undecided Airi.

"Let's go. There is no time to waste. The despicable thieves, as someone serving as the Academy's vigilance committee, I will not stand them unless we pay them back."

"That's true~, they also harassed us a lot at the exam~"

"Yes, I will continue detecting the Abyss, so please leave securing the path of retreat to me."

"—My apologies, everyone."

Airi let out a weak voice toward the Triad who were considerate and helpful to her.

"I'd also like to test my skills after all. Let's go Tillfur, Noct."

"Roo~ger"

"Yes, my Lord" (English)

Tillfur and Noct responded to Sharis's statement with a smile.

Right in front of the staircase leading to the third floor, it was discovered that Buzzheim and a small group of people were taking position there.

Buzzheim did not have any Drag-Ride equipped but he was holding on to Airi's bag. However, the four men of Wanheim Principality's military officer with him each were equipped with general purpose Drag-Ride.

Sharis quickly aimed her breath Gun and gave a warning.

"A warning towards all of you the officers of allied country Wanheim Principality! You are in possession of something that belongs to the civil official of our New Kingdom. If you return it now, I will not report your deed to your superior and the incident will not turn into serious matter. But if you refuse, we will take it back by force!"

In response, Buzzheim face shifted from surprise into a sneer.

"...Just when I thought what you are going to say, but could you have gotten the wrong people? The package was something that was given by an

acquaintance of mine.”

He said this as he retreated behind his subordinates.

“So you are refusing to return it. If so, I won’t be so polite in taking it back.”

The moment the finger of the Wyvern Sharis controlled touched on her Breath Gun, one of the followers wearing Wyrms rushed ahead suddenly.

He released a barrier to protect himself from the assault, so that he could forcefully charge forward even while deflecting bullet.

“The standard reaction huuh. That’s no good you know—”

Aware of the enemy’s movements, Tillfur who was similarly wearing Wyrms intercepted the enemy.

Tillfur’s Hammer swept aside the enemy’s Blade, making him lose balance. Then she landed a decisive blow to the shoulder of her opponent’s armor.

“Ga, ahh.....!?”

When the man flinched backwards after witnessing that smooth blow, Sharis who had switched her weapon followed with an attack by her Blade. The enemy’s armor was dispelled after his Force Core received impact.

Furthermore, Noct kept covering Airi while pulling the trigger of her Breath Gun to hold back the other men who tried to join the fray. The three of them splendidly coordinated their strategy and acted all at once.

“This is checkmate, Buzzheim-dono.”

“Ku...!”

As Sharis’s sword was pointed at him, the defenseless Buzzheim groaned.

The outcome was decided.

If they returned with full speed from now, they could go back before the blockade of the stair between second floor and the third floor was completed.

As soon as Airi had a slight peace of mind, Buzzheim loudly called out.

“I-I will not give it back to you! I know that I am holding the evidence of of you hiding something that will lead to the Ruin’s secret! If you hurt me, I’ll expose

everything in court! You wouldn't want that. After all—"

"Is that so—then I'll have you entrust that so called Ruin's secret to me."

"Na..!?"

The sudden incoming voice made Buzzheim, his men, the Triad, and Airi all freeze in place.

Standing there was a young man with delicate features clad in EX Wyvern, Dilwy Froias.

(Even though I don't want it to get seen by this person too who is an army officer of new kingdom—) Seeing how things have been going, Airi was desperately thinking about what to say to Dilwy.

However, the necessity of this disappeared a moment later.

"Wh-what are you saying!? Who will...ahh!"

- Zan-*, the EX Wyvern's Blade swung and cut off the head of Buzzheim.

"-...!?"

Right after Airi and the Triad felt terrified, Dilwy's Blade slashed once more.

Accompanied by the sound of air being cut away, the silver flash ran through the air and lopped off the head of the rest of Buzzheim's followers who were dumbfounded.

"Wha, what are you—"

Giving a glance at Sharis who whispered with pale face, Dilwy carelessly snatched the blood soaked bag of Airi from the arm of the headless Buzzheim.

His presence was completely the same like his usual quiet attitude without any change.

But that was instead felt so hair-raising terrifying.

"Ah, sorry to frighten everyone."

Dilwy said it with a deadpan face without revealing any emotion, as though what he had done was even less than crushing a bug.

“The squad that came with me are already heading back. Although it is quite difficult to communicate using Dragon Voice from this third level to the ground level, but in the unlikely chance you girls manage to call for help, it would be quite troublesome.”

“What are you saying? You...”

Sharis said with a slight trembling in her voice.

“Enough with the chit-chat. After all, threats require the necessary steps. So, how much should I say I wonder? Right, it’s nearly impossible for you to call for help. If you draw your weapon against me, then you will die. I will cut the hands and legs off of the three girls around you one by one before cutting their neck. Do you understand now? Well then, this thing about the way to the Ruin’s secret, could you please explain? Airi Arcadia?

“.....”

Airi could only shiver as the saliva in her mouth dried up.

Her heart and mind were unable to comprehend the reality in front of her.

However, one thing was obvious.

That, this man—was a horrifying enemy.

“Having said that, I did not expect that I can be this strong. Although my right wrist is now working thanks to that strange man—well, I don’t need to mention that too.”

“—Sharis, Tillfur, are you in position? The reaction is close.”

Adorned with her <Drake>, Noct whispered while holding a tense expression.

“Well, there is no other way—let’s go!”

Right after that call, Sharis’s Wyvern flew to the side.

Taking a deep breath, Noct grabbed Airi and she with Tillfur ran following Sharis.

“Sorry, but we aren’t a match against him! Your safety is the highest priority,

Airi!”

Sharis shouted while searching for a different path to get to the second floor.

The understanding of the nearby terrain and the detection of Abyss had been finished using Noct’s Drake.

“It appears that you all are unable to understand your own strength from the Class promotion exam, huh? I was threatening because all of you have no escape.”

Dilwy spoke with a calm tone as he chased them with EX Wyvern.

“Unfortunately, I understand about myself. Your worry is unnecessary!”

When they arrived at spacious, straight channel, Sharis fled towards the cramped passage at the side.

“—!?”

In that moment, a roar from the darkness before them sounds out through the air.

“Indeed you are the commander’s daughter. That’s not half bad.”

Dilwy who noticed the Triad’s intention whispered with a fearless smile.

Sharis’s plan was to escape by making fellow formidable enemies clashed with each other.

A ferocious medium-sized Abyss intercepted Dilwy from the front.

Part 12

On the other side, since the mission was about to reach the time limit, and the Ruin entered the alert state, 90% of the Drag-Knights were returning to above ground.

It was not only to escape the changing, deteriorating terrain but also to intercept the Abysses that were summoned around the Ruin. The combat force needed to return back for that.

“What do you mean? Why can’t we go rescue them!?”

In the middle of the Lobby where many Drag-Knights were gathered, Lisha, dressed in pilot suit flared up at the commander of Wanheim.

“That is because, due to the regulation regarding the Ruins, people the New Kingdom shall not enter the Dungeon while it’s in alert state.....”

“I already said that we can! Give us the permission already!”

As Lisha slammed her fist on the table, a voice came from behind them.

“—Good grief, could you please be quiet, your highness the princess of new kingdom.”

“-...!?”

A man in a blue coat made a sudden, unexpected appearance.

The Blue Tyrant—Singlen Shelbrit who had been concealing himself since last night.

Although the air was tense, he did not waver at all.

His dull black pupils were deeply dark like an abyss.

With that pair of eyes staring at her, Lisha slightly faltered.

“Can you explain to us? Our comrades are still trapped inside there.”

Singlen shrugged toward the grim gaze of Krulcifer standing beside Lisha.

“Oh? It seems that I was overestimating all you. I thought that although you all are just noble daughters playing around, you all are still people who belonged to the military after a fashion, looks like I’m wrong.”

“Don’t mess with me! There isn’t much time, so I can’t be sitting around pretending to make conversation with you!”

Krulcifer pushed out her hand to the side to hold Lisha back.

“The priority of the army is to protect Wanheim Principality’s princess Milmiette here—is that what you are saying?”

From Krulcifer’s words, Singlen merely responded with a smile.

Of course, although half of that reason was only a pretext. The truth was that they wanted as much combat force as possible to wipe out the Abysses that were appearing near the entrance quickly.

Thinking about it now, from the start this was the reason that princess Milmiette purposefully came to observe the exam personally.

If they recruited the officers of new kingdom to exterminate Abyss and the Ruin entered alert statem, they could gather combat force near the Dungeon’s entrance and made them protect the city. That was their aim.

The princess was a necessary presence to achieve each of these goals under just cause.

“This me who is holding the right of command this time have given the command to those in the Ruin to retreat. Well, do not worry, I will send in my men to search. If you’re lucky—hm? Aah”

There, a man wearing a white coat representing the White Ridge Knights whispered in Singlen’s ear.

“I see, it’s quite regrettable. Just now, it seems that the entrance to third level is blocked, and the bunches on the third level became stuck inside.”

“What—!?”

Hearing that, even the expression of Instructor Raigree who was keeping calm

changed drastically.

At the second and third level, there was a mechanism to blockade the level entrance.

Thus, it was strictly forbidden to enter the third floor. However, some did it accidentally.

Such as the forces of Buzzheim and the troops of Dilwy.

Additionally, the members of the Triad and who entered last Airi were also imprisoned on the third level.

“It can’t be helped. The investigation of Ruin is always accompanied by accident. We will send in rescue team after the alert state is dispelled, made up from those who still have spare strength left at that time.”

Those words from Singlen changed the atmosphere.

“— Don’t screw around.”

A cold voice passed through the the noisy Lobby.

From behind Lisha, Lux showed up while walking towards Singlen.

“Are you saying that you are abandoning them knowing that they are left behind? You’re abandoning fellow Drag-Knights while having the strength to save—”

Lisha and Krulcifer were surprised at how Lux spoke with such a menacing force that was unlike him and they stared at his face.

“Don’t lose your temper handyman. This is also the decision of the consul managing Ruin’s Gear. The ones trapped on the third floor are mostly Middle Class or lower anyway. They are just obsolete bunch who fell behind without any significant ability or quality. In this current world—there is no leeway to save the weak.”

“The weak.....you say?”

Singlen chuckled at the Lux’s quiet voice that contained rage.

“There also seems to be a few officer cadets mixed among those bunches. But, keep in mind, they are still military people. They should be resolved even

with this kind of situation. A Ruin that is moving into alert state will summon a lot of Abyss to its surrounding in no time at all. In a situation where the enemy's battle force surpassed yours, it's the basic to do defensive battle at the base. You are planning on going to rescue them for the sake of your own so called sense of justice, and expose the people of the city to danger?"

"....."

Lux had no words in response.

Lisha and others, along with the other military personnel who until now were insisting to rescue their comrades held their breath without being able to say any more objection.

Singlen's words were fundamentally correct.

Plus they cannot disobey the man who was the current commander of operations.

Whispered sighs spread like at his words. The commotion was drawing back like ripple.

Even Wanheim's military personnel who were demanding to send rescue team, along with the offices of the New Kingdom, they came to think that there was nothing they could do. However, "So what?"

"...huh?"

Lux's sudden words broke the silence.

He weaved through the gap of the bewildered soldiers and confronted Singlen.

"You said they are weak? That those who are left behind inside the Ruin, are bunches without significant ability or quality. That here, there is no leeway to save them."

"I said that, so?"

"Your decision is mistaken."

Lux muttered these words as he glanced around. Then he continued.

"Rescuing the surviving allied combat force is also our job. In this suppression

mission, when the time limit is passed, even if we exterminate Abyss after that, it won't add anything to our exam evaluation."

"And?"

"The possibility is high that our allies who are left behind inside the Dungeon likely entered the third level because they fought the Abyss in an unexpected situation and headed toward the third floor while the time hadn't run out. Or perhaps they chose that in order to save their comrade who was in the verge of danger. That's why they ended up left behind inside the Ruin."

Lux continued speaking matter-of-factly with calm demeanor.

"In the army, order is absolute. However, a knight that is able to make his own judgements considering the changing situations isn't the same like a coward who is merely flinching in front of enemy and only tries to survive without problems. You —which of the two are you?"

A burst of commotion spread throughout the Lobby.

Lux faced the commander of the Seven Dragon Paladins, Singlen who was also appointed as the commander of the operation this time, with opposing attitude right to his face.

"....."

Singlen mulled over Lux's words quietly for a few seconds before giving an empty smile.

"Kukukukuku. You're a more interesting man than I expected. My opinion of you has slightly changed. But see, you are a powerless human. At this place, you are unable to ignore the rules set by Wanheim Principality."

"Certainly. —Save only one exception."

Right after Lux answered, *Bang!* the door of the Lobby was kicked open and a man entered.

It was another member of Seven Dragon Paladins the same like Singlen, Greifer.

"I spoke to the geezers at the government office. If it is Seven Dragon Paladins who are recognized by the World Agreement, it seems they can exercise a

unique authority even toward a Ruin of another country yeah? Especially in emergency cases, they can trespass into Ruin without going through protocol—”

“Greifer...”

“Well, my duty too originally was to protect the princess, but I also gotta go to search for that Coral.”

Lux felt his conviction from that sentence.

Right after that Lux turned again to face Singlen.

“I swear to the vice-captain of the Seven Dragon Paladins, Singlen Shelbrit. At this very minute, I aspire to become the Seven Dragon Paladins of New Kingdom Atismata!”

“-...!?”

The words of Lux took everyone by surprise.

As the ripples of noise spread, an uninhibited smile emerged on Singlen’s face.

“You’re taking a big step just to save your sister huh. The man who before this refused to join by that much.”

“Time is running short. Even if you disagree, I will go to rescue them even if I have to violate the rule.”

“—Fuh, fine then.”

Lux’s words caused Singlen to hold his laughter.

“I already obtained the consent of the people in authority. The last descendant of the old empire, the ruined prince Lux Arcadia. I’ll recognize you as the Seven Dragon Paladins of New Kingdom Atismata.”

Singlen loudly announced at the top of his voice toward everyone present.

While the Lobby was in commotion due to the surprises, Lux walked away as though he was parting through the officers.

Midway as he passed Lisha, Krulcifer, Philuffy, and others, he stopped momentarily and whispered.

“My apologies, Lisha-sama. Please take care of the rest.”

Lisha understood what he meant and nodded back with a confident smile.

“...Got it, get the better of that twisted man and leave him speechless.”

“Yes.”

Lux nodded with a serious expression and then he stood at the edge of the spiral staircase’s entrance that connected to the Dungeon’s Gate.

“You’re ready, prince?”

Lux nodded his head wordlessly and pulled out Bahamut’s Sword Device.

Greifer also readied the Sword Device of Cuelebre. Together they kicked the handrail and jumped down to the center.

The people and the military surrounding them didn’t even have time to be surprised as a roar thundered from the Ruin.

—BliiiiiiiIIII-!

“—!?”

Countless Abyss emerged from below the widely open spiral staircase through the Gate.

The first to approach them were the Gargoyles, Chimeras, and other winged beasts that flew at them in a straight line from the central hole.

Lux and Greifer both pushed the button of their Sword Device and equipped their respective Divine Drag-Ride.

“—Yoruka, I’ll leave them to you!”

After Lux’s sharp shout, numerous cuts appeared across the air. Just from that, the many Abysses were cut apart and scattered everywhere in the blink of eye.

After a breath, a Drake’s camouflage function was lifted, and a black haired girl with exotic foreign clothes was revealed piloting a Divine Drag-Ride.

“I have been waiting impatiently for your command, my lord.”

The assassin Drag-Knight who was formerly called as the Empire’s Assassin Blade—Kirihome Yoruka.

In order to obtain assistance in this Ruin of foreign country where they were in a situation that was under many restrictions, Lux called for her even with the understanding of the dangers.

“Uoh!? Who the hell is this woman?”

“Don’t worry. She is my—ah, my companion.”

Lux who wasn’t an imperial family of the old empire anymore found it hard to call her as his servant or subordinate, so he spoke that.

Yoruka was falling while cutting down winged Abysses one after another that crossed path with her, as though being vanguard for Lux and Greifer.

Three people landed on the floor where four Abyss were cleared out at the same time. They then took position on the Gate’s entrance that was enveloped with dim darkness.

When Lux and co stood above the Gate wearing their respective Drag-Ride, they were immediately pulled into the inside.

At the same time Yoruka pulled out her Sword Device, and countless windows of light floated from her shoulder armor.

“Search Frame – On(Probe Mechanism – Boot Up)”

At the same time with Yoruka’s whisper, countless lines of light spread radially from her shoulder armor and spread widely, crawling in high-speed along the ground and walls of the Dungeon.

The Divine Drag-Ride of special equipment type, Yato no Kami was provided with functions like enemy search, camouflage, support, supplement, repair and so on. Its abilities were a few ranks above the general purpose Drag-Ride, Drake. (TN: The special equipment type here refer to Drake-type Drag-Ride that is installed with various ability that Wyvern-type and Wyrn-type doesn’t have)
“—My lord, your younger sister is still safe and sound. The three others around her are all right as well. From the coordinates, they are to the northeast part of

the third level. Although they are moving little by little.”

Most likely, they were searching for the exit of third level while running away from enemy at the same time.

The three girls of the Triad were doing everything they could to protect Airi even under this situation.

Their escape route was blocked, and they were left behind. In that desperate situation, they didn't give up and continued to fight.

Just this fact made strength welled up in Lux chest.

“Yoruka, can I ask you to guide us through the Dungeon? I want you to derive the shortest route while avoiding battle with Abyss as much as possible.”

“Affirmative my lord.”

Yoruka responded, at the same time she drove the four legs of Yato no Kami and jumped with a movement as though she was kicking midair.

That special armament that was called <Vacuum Step> made it possible to make that frame of special equipment-type Drag-Ride that possessed no ability to fly to move as though it was sliding in the air.

“I see, for you to have this kind of terrifying ally, looks like you prince got more then meet they eye huh.”

Greifer exclaimed in admiration from Yoruka's expert performance. From time to time, he sent flying the Abyss that was coming from behind using his Tail Blade.

After a few minutes moving in high speed through the corridor, leaving behind the flowing scenery, Yoruka who was going ahead dropped her speed.

“We have arrived, my lord. It is right below us.”

“-.....!?”

Seeing the scene, Lux could not help but be shocked.

Each floor had a large stair set up leading to the bottom. The entrance of the stair to the third level there was sealed by a solid iron lattice.

“Hah, just something like this—!”

Greifer filled his Tail Blade with energy and slashed, but only sparks flew out.

“—This is not an ordinary iron lattice!?”

Lux also followed, slashing his black great sword—Chaos Brandhe, but it bounced off the same.

The thick lattice around the size of an adult’s arm was only scratched a little.

It could possibly take them half an hour in order to break down the lattice.

“Nothing could be done, huh. Destroying this barrier is the key, but another way into the third floor is—”

“.....”

Lux bitterly kept thinking.

(Calm down, there should be other ways. If I remember right, when they explained this Dungeon’s structure description—) [Lux-san! Are you close!? Please respond!]

“-.....!?”

At that moment, communication came through from the Dragon Voice of Noct’s Drake.

[I am here, Noct! We are above your position on the second floor! But—]

“I know what you want to say, Lux-kun. We also tried it. If only we could destroy the partition between us, we will be able to escape somehow. —But”

“Sharis-san! Airi! Everyone else too—”

Across lattice that divided the area—near the large stair, he could see the figure of the Triad and Airi.

They seemed to have struggle too, but as expected it seemed they also failed to destroy the lattice from the third floor side.

It was evidenced by Sharis’s weapon being in tatters.

“.....Lux-kun, we are still safe. Don’t be too rash. The alert state of this Ruin won’t last for long right? Then it’s fine. If it’s just a few minutes, we will hold on somehow.”

“I’m rea-ally frazzled but, compared to Celis-senpai’s training this is still better perhaps.”

“Yes, I am used to waiting.”

Although Sharis and others showed a smile, it was obvious they were bluffing.

Their forehead and neck were covered with sweat, and ragged breathing could be heard.

They were fatigued from the Class promotion exam, in addition to the mission to suppress the Abyss that they participated in without resting.

On top of all that, they seemed to have been battling with some sort of formidable enemy several times as evidenced by the cracks in their armor.

“My lord, there is an influx of Abyss coming from behind us. On your younger sister’s side, there is the presence of Drag-Ride approaching. From their situation, it does not seem like that it’s an allied Drag-Knight.”

“.....”

Lux had an idea about a party who would aim at Airi.

TheDragon Marauder, whose goal was to explore Ruin and obtain treasures through any means to weaken the power of countries that currently were in possession of Ruin.

This threat was approaching the Triad and Airi from their side.

“Don’t worry about my safety, Nii-san. I am still okay—”

And then, Airi called out from behind Noct.

She had the same calm and graceful usual tone, with a smile of a young lady that smoothly navigated the society.

Lux also understood that she was acting tough.

“Airi, I understand.”

Thus, Lux also answered with his usual gentle smile.

Just like what he had done many times since their childhood in the past until now, he used the same voice like when he patted her head and told her this.

“I will come save you soon, so wait just a little bit more for me.”

“-.....!?”

Lux’s words made Airi’s expression froze.

The mask of calmness she would always keep on her face gradually collapsed and her shoulder began trembling.

“N-Nii-san, what are you talking about.It won’t work, please consider the situation. In any case, the second level and the third level are completely separated now!”

Even so, Lux calmly breathed in without a single twitch on his expression.

“No—there’s a way.”

“—Eh?”

Lux calmly made a statement to that caused Airi and the Triad to stir.

“There is a one-way Portal in this Dungeon that connect to the lower floor. If we use that, we can get to the third floor even from here.”

“Please hold on!? What are you thinking!? The Portal in this Dungeon will only lead you to the bottom! In order to save us, even you will be locked in. I don’t—want to become Nii-san’s burden anymore!”

“Airi...”

Seeing Airi shouting sadly, someone placed a hand on her head.

“We are also begging you. Don’t be too rash, Lux-kun.”

Sharis cut in with a gentle expression.

“I am very glad you are coming to save us. However, this is our responsibility. After all, we the Triad got lured here by that bunch. We were unable to see through their aim and exposed Airi-chan to danger.”

“Yes, we too do not wish to be a hindrance anymore to Lux-san.”

“We-ell, you don’t have to worry so much. We’ve survived till now, haven’t we—”

And so Sharis and Noct requested, and Tillfur echoed their sentiments with a

wry smile.

They have obviously been through quite a bit with all the wounds over their body, but the four acted tough so not to burden Lux even more than this.

“No matter what, we the Triad will do our utmost to protect your sister. So—”

Sharis said it with a somewhat lonely tone, but also with the conviction of a warrior.

But—

“—Yoruka, can you confirm the location of the transporter at the third level?”

“What...!?”

The words that Lux said with serious face caused the face of the three Triad to change color.

“Why do you go so far...”

While Airi whispered with a stunned look, Yoruka gave her report to Lux indifferently.

“It looks like it’s a little far from here. It’s position is to the northeast.”

“Understood. I want you to stay here and lure the Abyss swarm that come. Can I leave it to you?”

“It is regrettable that I cannot join you my lord, but it cannot be helped isn’t it.”

Yoruka responded with a hearty smile and she took a stance with her katana-type Blade.

“Let’s go, Greifer!”

“Got it. I too gotta go find that Coral.”

Lux steered Bahamut towards the Portal.

“Everyone! Hold on a bit longer!”

Right after he yelled, he left the stair in the blink of eye and quickly flew wearing through the corridor.

Before long they found a circle engraved with some unknown text. They landed on it.

The time it took the Portal to move them towards the interior of the Ruin was quite short.

The light began to overflow around Lux and Greifer along with the Drag-Ride.

“Sorry, Greifer for dragging you with me.”

“Hah, I have not gotten weak enough that I require your highness’ concern.”

In reply to Lux’s apology, Greifer laughed confidently.

In that moment, their weight seemed to disappear and their vision is covered by light.

As their field of vision cleared up, some medium sized Abyss were coming.

It was a situation that if it was the average Drag-Knight, this would become an assault that was like an ambush where they wouldn’t even be able to react.

However, the two members of the Seven Dragon Paladins didn’t waver at all even in this situation and they moved.

“—Photon Dive.”

As sharp teeth and claws approached, Greifer’s Cuelebre was wrapped in light.

The Divine Raiment that performed invincibility for a few seconds repelled the attack of the Abyss before his eyes, it was at that moment Lux’s Bahamut took action.

“Reload on Fire.”

Time was compressed, and then his speed was accelerated by several fold which he used to launch super speed slashes.

Criss-crossing slashes from a blade resulted in the beast’s body to be completely hacked to pieces.

Originally, it required preparation to counter the enemy’s attack. However, Greifer’s Photon Dive created an opening that allowed Lux to attack.

“You took the prey, huh. Oh well, not much time left anyway, I’ll forgive you.”

“Much appreciated.”

Lux expressed his appreciation, then continued flying towards where Airi was.

However, although the Ruin was under alert state, surprisingly few Abyss appeared.

He felt it strange even while they arrived at the location of the Triad and Airi.

Across from them, the girls were facing a man.

“So you all also came here?”

The Silver Flash, Dilwy Froias.

A military officer who at this occasion was serving as a group leader leading the soldiers of new kingdom who were taking exam here.

“Well yeah. Rather than that where is your comrades? Also by the way, have you seen a Drag-Knight with a girly face named Coral or a man named Buzzheim?”

Landing nearby, Greifer raised some questions.

Lux intended to ask a question, when Sharis made a tense voice.

“Both of you be careful! That man is suspicious! Buzzheim and his men were also killed by him!”

Lux and Greifer were puzzled after hearing those words.

But, Dilwy, who didn’t look bothered at the slightest, began laughing softly.

“That is a misunderstanding. They were attacked by some parasitic Abyss. And these kids saw me clean up the situation so they think I killed them. Why would I kill people of my own country and the soldier of Wanheim?”

“So...what is that thing in your hand then?”

“Oh this. This is something Buzzheim-dono dropped. I picked it up to hold on to it for now. But the content is somewhat suspicious for this to be his item. Inside there is a diary of a girl and some ancient archives from Ruin slipped in between.”

“.....”

After he muttered, he opened that ancient document and traced its text in a display.

“Even though I look like this, I am very interested in these treasures related to Ruin. I also once spent my time deciphering ancient text. I don’t understand the exact content of this text because I’m not that knowledgeable though.”

“What are you saying—”

“The only thing that I understand from this text, is Holy Arcadia Empire—only that name. I’ve never heard that this kind of ancient document has been submitted. I have connection with the consuls of the royal capital see. If this document is something that you secretly concealed, then you two will need to be questioned for the responsibility.....no, about the connection between that old empire and the Ruin.”

“—?!”

Airi had a tragic expression after hearing this.

The secret that she thought should not be known to others was exposed now.

“Lux Arcadia. And Airi Arcadia. Are you two siblings knows about something? The old empire, and its connection to the Ruin that is described in this ancient document. The true identity of the two of you the imperial family of the old empire—”

Dilwy’s words surprised everyone at that place.

Between the intermittent alarm sounds and shaking red light, Lux breathed calmly.

“.....I don’t know. Even if I did I wouldn’t tell you.”

He stared at Dilwy with cold eyes.

“You want to ask why...it is because you are a Dragon Marauder’s spy, infiltrating the new kingdom’s military looking for a chance.”

“—?!”

As Lux asserted this, everyone there was tense.

“Why did you take your comrades into the third level of this Ruin? It is well known that the dungeon is deep, and exploring it is not allowed. For such an honest and loyal soldier who is famous like you, why would you commit such baffling act?”

“...You think too highly of me, Lux-kun. I am not perfect. Even I will make a miss when several unfortunate accidents piled up one after another.”

Lux continued staring at Dilwy who was smiling bitterly.

“The purpose of the criminals Dragon Marauder is to plunder treasures in the Ruin in order to hamper the countries’ military power. You caused the ruins to enter an alert state, you also provoked Buzzheim to steal the ancient document my sister had, in order to lay the blame on her, while you yourself will search for the secret of the Ruin—”

“.....I have said several times already, kid. Buzzheim-dono was killed because he was possessed by Abyss. Are you so committed to make me out as a traitor so you can escape from my question?”

“The Portal to go to the third level is a one way road that go from above to below. That’s why, in the case you go down the level without using that, you won’t be conscious of the stair location. Can you grasp the route I used from the place where I was transferred to reach until this spot?

“.....”

Lux’s question elicited only silence from Dilwy and his expression vanished.

“The corpse we saw had no trace of possession because of Abyss. In other words—”

“There isn’t anything else to say, meek man. You are the traitor who killed your own comrades.”

Greifer calmly finished Lux’s words, and held up his Tail Sword.

Lux and Greifer deliberately showed an ignorant attitude based on their suspicion of Dilwy.

“—Hu”

As Dilwy heard their words, the atmosphere changed.

“It seems that I underestimated you a little. The true identity of the Black Hero was you, a kid that appeared to be nothing special. Honestly, it was hard to believe.”

“Then, as expected my bag was stolen because—?”

As Airi whispered, Dilwy’s shoulders shook in laughter.

“You misunderstand, it was purely by chance. I was just watching you. I happened to overhear your conversation with Singlen and induced Buzzheim by giving him hint to steal the bag with the ancient document. Another option would be using the magic flute to make the Abyss kidnap you.”

“The plan was well-planned but the execution was stupid. Do you truly believe you can deal with two users of Divine Drag-Ride by yourself?”

Taking Greifer’s words as a signal, Lux also raised his great sword.

When the explosive situation reached the limit, Dilwy’s both eyes snapped open and he flew high.

“-.....!”

The ceiling was flashing with the red warning light.

From there, he swooped down and unleashed a stabbing attack with his Blade.

From above—especially from right overhead was the position that Drag-Ride found it the most difficult to defend against.

When Lux and Greifer barely avoided that attack, the Blade of the EX Wyvern Dilwy was riding grazed through.

“This guy...!?”

- Ceng!* As the crisp sound of air being sliced resounded, a slash drawing the trajectory of crescent moon came flying.

Greifer twisted his body to avoid the attack. Then Dilwy quickly turned his right wrist resulting in a second cut, third cut, till fifth slash cutting the air.

Criss-cross. Cascading shocks from the slashes crossing many times over were

also moving towards Lux next.

Lux avoided the slashes by a mere millimeter, as the rocks behind him became engorged with countless deep cut marks.

“Shot Blade(Dragon Teeth Shot Sword)—, a rare weapon that general purpose Drag-Ride can use huh.....”

Although the performance was not equal to that of special armament of Divine Drag-Ride, rare weapon with level of performance that was close to that existed.

The Shot Blade, it could release energy from the forward motion of its blade, releasing arrow-like shots with a slash.

Lux heard from Sharis that Dilwy’s famous “Silver Flash” nickname came from the fact that he was more skilled than anyone else with using that special armament.

“That’s quite something. So the rumor that you are a man who cannot stand anymore in front line because your right hand is broken and unusable is just a bluff huh. That’s some personality you got there.”

“You are incorrect—. Until last night, I was a weakling exactly like your description.”

“...What do you mean?”

Dilwy quietly smiled while listening to Lux’s question.

“Why!? Why would—! You who are my father’s direct subordinate, why would you collude with the Dragon Marauder?”

As the daughter of the deputy commander of the New Kingdom’s military, Sharis shouted at that conversation, resulting in Dilwy’s exasperated sigh.

“Stupid question. A rich lady who happens to stand out among the weakling and is contented with her lot won’t get it. You see, I have always been dissatisfied. Five years ago, I was injured by the ‘calamity’ of Blackend Kingdom, and after returning home, I entered under the banner of the new kingdom as Drag-Knight of moderate faction.”

“Then, you...!?”

“You are of the rebel army that inherited the will of the Old Empire...is that correct?”

Tillfur and Noct flared up, but Dilwy snorted.

“That’s a shallow thinking. I am not interested in that sort of label. Whether it is the Old empire or the New Kingdom, it doesn’t matter. I, Dilwy Froias, being born as a man in a family of knights only aim to become the strongest Drag-Knight.”

“-.....!? For that sort of goal, you abandon the New Kingdom to join the Dragon Marauder? You go so far as to ignore her majesty’s kindness in promoting you as a non-commisioned officer—”

When Airi shouted incredulously, Dilwy wordlessly pulled out his Shot Blade.

It cut through the air with a strange sound and the shockwave pierced the air flying towards Airi’s neck.

Noct moved to block the attack but her defense was broken, with the shockwaves hitting even her clothes.

“Guh, ah...!”

“Noct!?”

“Shut up please. Did I ask for your opinion? Mindless pawns will be mindless pawns, you can just feel satisfied as you are being used. Someone not even aiming for the top, not even lamenting their own powerlessness, existing just to complete the orders given to them. How can incompetent like that understand my distress?”

“-.....!?”

His words caused the Triad to show pained expression.

But the next moment, two Drag-Knights attacked towards Dilwy’s sneering face.

“—Don’t screw around.”

Lux’s Bahamut flew parabolically.

He used the momentum from the free fall to add some power to his attack as

he swooped past.

The use of the free fall part of the flight path (Downflow) was a higher level technique with more force than a stabbing attack.

Even if Dilwy's skill let him rival EX Class Drag-Knight, it should be difficult to counter the power in the incoming attack, but—.

“—Battle Array – Vicissitudes.”

“.....-!?”

At the moment they crossed each other, Dilwy's <EX Wyvern> released a barrier which shocked Lux.

It was a parrying technique that made use of tuning, to create sharp force field that averted attack from left to right.

That is the special move of barrier manipulation that the Blue Tyrant, Singlen Shelbrit showed Lux.

Dilwy grinned wickedly and swung his Blade to Lux whose attack was evaded and showed a defenseless back.

He is aiming at the brainstem part, where the barrier of the armor was thin.

Greifer's Tail Sword blocked that attack which assaulted in a timing of certain kill.

The force by their attacks caused both of them to be repelled backwards away from each other.

“Hah, what a terrifying person, to be able to use even that vice captain-sama's technique. Well, you ain't gonna win against me with just that though.”

“...Seven years ago I once studied under Sir Singlen. At that time I was unable to learn any of his moves. But now, I finally obtained skill of that level.”

Dilwy muttered to himself intoxicatedly.

“Wanheim Principality's Seven Dragon Paladins..... If it's you who start from being a lowly orphan and climbed up until being the princess's aide, you should be able to understand my pride too aren't you?”

“Unfortunately, I ain't interested in your life. Let's finish this quickly yeah,

Dragon Marauder's spy."

"You are after all, just a wild dog lured by bait. —Then, let me finish you off here."

While taking Greifer's shower of attacks one after another, Dilwy suddenly fired towards the ground with his Howling Howl.

"-.....!?"

Large amounts of dust suddenly arose inside the gloomy underground of the Dungeon, and then numerous silver flashes of light headed towards Greifer.

"—Photon Dive!"

Greifer's Cuelebre wasted no time to activate its Divine Raiment of invisibility and all the slashes from the Shot Blade were deflected.

This was the battle style of Greifer and Cuelebre that excelled in defensive ability.

Not giving the opponent the opportunity to counterattack and dragged it into a battle where they could only defend while destroying all path of retreat—it was like a seasoned hunter tracking his enemy before giving the final blow.

However, he was affected by the smoke cloud that made him lose track of Dilwy's silhouette.

"—What!?"

As Greifer's eyes search for his lost target, EX Wyvern jumped out from behind Airi and the Triad.

"-.....!?"

"—Reload on Fire."

But, Lux who stood on his way a moment quicker activated Bahamut's Divine Raiment.

Using his time compression, he released consecutive high-speed slashes.

The slashes aimed towards EX Wyvern's wrists and shoulders in an attempt to break the barrier. But in that moment, Lux noticed something and he changed his movement.

Five Daggers were thrown in parabolic arc from behind Dilwy.

Lux immediately knocked them down and at the end he aimed at Dilwy's armor.

But, his attack was barely blocked by Shot Blade and a distance was opened once more between them.

"Even though I was hiding inside smokescreen so my attack pattern wouldn't be read, even so my movement was still predicted—that's really something isn't it? I'm getting a better opinion on you two now."

"....."

Having two Divine Drag-Rides as his opponent at the same time, Dilwy still revealed a composed expression.

Seeing this, Lux had a strange sensation in his chest.

Although Greifer too maintained a casual attitude, he gradually began to frown with suspicion.

(Certainly, he might be already a brilliant Drag-Knight from the beginning, but—) No matter how he was using an EX Wyvern with stacked up tuning and he was an expert of a rare weapon, but would that be enough to make him able to fight the current Lux and Greifer until this much?

"It looks like, your royal highness is also confused huh?"

Greifer suddenly said such thing as he stood there.

"It's really strange. With that Drag-Ride and armament, it's not like that sort of move is impossible—but, no matter how I see it that man is strange. I cannot say it well but, he ain't a normal human for sure."

Lux agreed with Greifer.

But, he still wasn't really confident with his hypothesis.

"Is that it? That is your limit? The name of Seven Dragon Paladins is going to cry you know?"

Greifer steps forward to meet the mocking Dilwy.

"You're on. I'm also tired hearing your lecture, I'll finish this in the next

move.”

Then, Cuelebre flew and threw numerous Daggers towards Dilwy.

“Stupid man. Do you not understand that these tricks don’t work on me?”

In response, Dilwy moved his Shot Blade swiftly in various arcs to release shockwaves.

The mesh-shaped shockwaves entangled the Daggers and deflected them.

In long-range battle, Dilwy’s Shot Blade held the advantage.

When Greifer activated Photon Dive to defend against the silver flashes heading towards him, Dilwy grinned.

“—Battle Array – Vicissitudes. How incompetent can you be to use the same move twice in a battle.”

Dilwy formed a barrier forcefield in the timing of impact to parry the attack from right to left.

Greifer’s slash was dodged and he stood still with his defenseless back exposed to Dilwy.

“I have seen through the amount of time you can operate your Divine Raiment. —You should apologize to your princess from the other world.”

Without missing the opportunity, Dilwy slashed at his back.

However—,

“...what!?”

Instead of what Dilwy expected, Cuelebre’s Photon Dive did not end, the light wall was deflecting the slash toward the back.

Realizing his mistake, Dilwy attempted to flee from Greifer’s thrust, however it was too late.

“—The one incompetent is you right? I fought a woman who saw through this right from the start y’know?”

The stretching Tail Blade drew a spiral trajectory to avoid Dilwy’s barrier and pierced his barrier.

As the blade cut across his chest, droplets of fresh blood rushed out.

“Gobah...!?”

Dilwy vomited blood as his eyes rolled back.

At that moment—the outcome was decided.

“...As I thought. It is easy to deal with opponents that you do not need to worry about killing.”

The Photon Dive’s duration on Cuelebre.

Normally Greifer would deliberately fixed the duration of his Divine Raiment to a certain period and lifted the effect in short several seconds to mislead people of the timing of his invincibility.

Although Lux heard about this matter from Krulcifer after the All-Dragon battle, it was still a splendid plan.

“Now then, we gotta think about how to get out of here. Although most of the Abyss seems to be gone outside, we still need to find that Coral.”

The relaxed Greifer turned away from Dilwy’s dead corpse.

At that moment, Lux noticed something strange.

“Behind you! Greifer!”

“_____”

Greifer heard Lux and turned back around while holding up the Tail Blade as a shield.

However, his defense was a little slow. And Dilwy’s Blade bit deeply into his armor.

“Guh, ah...!?”

Greifer was blown backward, but he somehow held his ground.

Dilwy, who should have been completely dead, continued to move.

His chest was cracking, like dried fish.

“Wha...what the hell is this guy?!”

Greifer who was normally aloof had a distorted expression from shock.

It wasn't an illusion nor a fantasy. Dilwy, who could not have possibly survived the fatal injury, was giving a gruesome smile.

His hand was not holding the EX Wyvern's control lever, but a small knife.

There was a strange burst of seven-color aura coming out of the knife.

"...I will not lose. Because that hero has saved me! I who was clinging even to Dragon Marauder looking for hope, is filled with this light.....!"

"What did, you mean!?"

"Let me awaken! My voice, my cry, my shout, if they are reaching..... Grant "Baptism" throughout my whole body, guide me! Oh "Elixir"!"

- Stab*. Dilwy, with his trembling hand, inserted the knife into his own left chest. With the knife in his chest, he underwent another strange mutation.

"-.....!? Wh-What is that? What is happening!?"

Sharis who was watching from the side was stunned as she whispered.

While Everyone present was taken by shock, Dilwy's body that was still wearing EX Wyvern was suddenly—transforming.

The same black pattern that was running on his right wrist spread out from his left chest to the rest of his body.

His body was like a pale flame wrapped in waves of heat, being colored darker and darker.

His skin became darker than night, while his hair turned white.

His eyelids opened wide, showing eyes radiating a scarlet red light like fresh blood.

"Wh-What is that...? It is not the Drag-Ride—but he himself that is changing—!?"

"Yes, the cause of calamity that occurred in various places, could it be....."

"Nocturnal....., is this the new type Abyss—!?"

Tillfur, Noct, and Airi were shaking as this devil began to make its first sound of its birth in this world.

“SHAaAAAAAAAAaAAAAaaAAAAaAaAAAAAAAH!”

It was the roar of devil from a human that wasn't a human.

That monstrous shriek was far more terrible than the Abyss that was the nemesis of human. The screams shocked the walls of the Dungeon as well as the eardrums of everyone present.

The time passing seemed to be a mesh of nightmare with reality as the devil flew together with the Drag-Ride.

“—!?”

Fast.

Compared to the winged Abysses they fought previously, he was considerably faster.

EX Wyvern crept along the ground in a very low flight.

If a blunder was made—no, with a speed that wouldn't stop even if it crashed on the opponent, Dilwy who was changed into devil attacked Lux.

“Kuh...!”

He did not have time to use Reload on Fire to accelerate time.

Lux swung his great sword using Quick Draw and slashed horizontally at Dilwy who was approaching like a bullet.

—But,

“Ku ku ku—this is the strength of the so called Black Hero?”

“.....-!?”

Lux was shocked as the dark voice reached his ear.

Dilwy's Shot Blade met Lux's Chaos Brand, resulting in the projection of some intense sparks.

“...Gu!?”

Lux was blown directly to the side from receiving the charge’s gust of wind.

Dilwy who looked like he was going to crash on the rock wall sharply dove up on the spot.

He quickly somersaulted through the air, then moved towards Greifer next.

“What..!? This thing—”

From a super low-altitude flight to rapidly rising followed by a rapid dive into a backflip.

The more preeminent someone was in handling Drag-Ride, the more they would understand just how impossible that movement was.

Drag-Ride couldn’t be moved with just pure operating skill.

Things like the burden on the rider’s body and stamina, the timing of breathing, and so on existed.

No matter how proficient someone was at swimming, they wouldn’t be able to dive underwater for tens of minutes without breathing.

Thus, witnessing Dilwy making impossible movements for a Drag-Knight created a moment of opening in Greifer which Dilwy took advantage of. Greifer was blown away.

“Chih...! This damn monster”

Lux and Greifer adjusted their movement in preparation for pursuing attack.

But unexpectedly Dilwy and the EX Wyvern flew until near the ceiling of the hall, taking a position to look down on everyone there.

“—!? Everyone, quick! Defend yourselves!”

Lux immediately understood his intentions, and at the same time he flew to where Airi and others were at.

The devil’s eyes glowed deep red and grinned wickedly while overlooking the scenery.

Next, the right hand armor gripped the Shot Blade which began to emit light

energy.

“—Silver Flash, Hail Fang”

- Gin-!* With a roaring sound that could be heard splitting through the air, a flash of shockwave that drew an arc like crescent moon was fired.

Originally, the silver flash the Shot Blade fired was limited to several shots per breath because of the burden on the user’s stamina and mind.

But this attack appeared to be an unending torrent of rain of light pouring down on the Dungeon’s zone.

“_____”

Several hundred overlapping sound of slicing wind and the destruction sound of the ground getting pulverized could be heard.

The storm of hail that reached them in less than a second erased the stifled scream of the girls, blowing away even their consciousness and thought.

Their breathing stopped in their tenseness and fear, and ashes were swept up that blocked their vision.

As it felt like the endless nightmare was ending—before long, Airi opened her eyes.

“.....U, ah.”

Due to the aftermath of the attack, dust covered their bodies.

The previously sturdy walls of rock were cut apart, and the terrain was completely different.

While lying on the debris, Airi gingerly moved her fingertips.

Fortunately, her body was intact.

In addition, the Triad were lying around her with their Drag-Ride cancelled off.

“Everyone—please, get ahold of yourself.”

Perhaps due to being strained to their physical limit, the three of them could only stir a little bit.

Airi intended to call for help but as she looked up, the scene made her at a loss for words.

“—Ha, hah, ku...a”

Buried in the rubble with Bahamut, Lux was breathing hard.

Fatigued from all the fighting, Lux’s face had an anguished expression and his whole body was dripping with sweat.

“End Action huh..... a hidden move of Drag-Ride operation that was introduced during the Old Empire days, a technique that unleashed unlimited slashes. But even it has to end, and it seems your strength has finally reached its limit.”

“Damn....., it”

In an equally ragged state, Greifer in Cuelebre was laying at the opposite side of Lux.

The invincibility of his Photon Dive could only be maintained for about 10 seconds at maximum.

So, on this prolonged, uninterrupted attack that lasted more than ten second, he naturally could not make it out unscathed.

At the same time, Lux too was protecting Airi, and the Triad using End Action and he succeeded, but it took everything he had to do so.

The two of them were exhausted until very nearly the limit while they did their all so only their Divine Drag-Ride wouldn’t get desummoned.

That was their only way to resist in their current state.

“—Magnificent.”

Dilwy smirked in intoxication in the air as he looked down from above at everyone who was standing still unable to move.

“Ah, what a wonderful power.”

He kept muttering to himself heartily.

“The officer cadets of the new kingdom, a Seven Dragon Paladins, the Black Hero.....I transcended and surpassed all their strength. Dilwy Froias is able to return in his true form as a Drag-Knight who aimed for the seat of the strongest like in the past. I will be able to realize the dream that I have held through a long time from here on. I’ll immediately build a new legend. I can surpass the Blue Tyrant—the mentor who once abandoned me. If it’s the current me, even that will soon come true.”

Dilwy ended his intoxicated self-praising words, and moved his venomous red eyes towards Lux.

“Although the outcome has already been decided, I do have some questions left for you, Lux Arcadia.”

He opened Airi’s bag and pointed to one of the lines of text in the ancient documents.

“The name of ”Arcadia” recorded in this ancient text. I wanted to ask before I killed you if you are associated with these Ruin, and know something about it.”

“.....You have already betrayed everyone, what is the point? Just what do you intend to obtain by becoming the strongest Drag-Knight whatever for the sake of Dragon Marauder?”

Although his breathing was ragged, even then Lux’s eyes weren’t dead.

Seeing this, Dilwy’s jet black face twisted as he laughed with bared teeth.

“The Dragon Marauder you say...? I have no more business with them. My goal was to attain even greater power from this Ruin. In order to prove my strength as Drag-Knight, I need to cause more chaos and great war.....!”

His body was wrapped in dark desire and resentment.

It was the answer of the man who was writhing in agony from being toyed by the reign of the old empire and the distortion of the era.

His path as Drag-Knight met setback, his hope stolen, and after clinging on his past for a long time, this was his true real nature.

“Don’t make me ask you a second time, Lux Arcadia! Give me all the knowledge you own, show me the path to reach the deepest layers of these

ruins! Otherwise—”

Dilwy turned his ominous crimson gaze towards Airi and the Triad, and he yelled.

The roar of devil shook the air around him. Right then,

“Understood. It looks like, this is as far as it goes.”

Airi who was dirtied by the dust of the smashed rock wall slowly stood up and muttered.

“Nii-san over there—No, that person who I called brother and used by me, the Lord(Creator) of the Ruin is ignorant of my true identity. Asking him is useless.”

“Ai,ri...?”

Lux who stood up trying to rally up Bahamut saw his sister’s cold expression and icy eyes.

“Hou, you are saying that you are a survivor of Ruin, connected to the name of Arcadia written here? That you were hiding it all this time until now?”

“More accurately speaking, I just forgot about it. In order to protect my own safety—but, there is no meaning even if I hide it in this situation. Even I value my own life.”

Airi spoke these words fluently.

Then, she looked at the bewildered Lux with a cold expression.

“When I found that old document, I remembered. That my true identity is one of the Lords, Aeryl vi Arcadia, and also my original purpose and mission—”

“Y-you, what are you saying...? What is the meaning of this, Airi missy!”

Airi turned a deaf ear to Sharis, who could only move half her body.

“In any case, the man who I called as “Nii-san” and used as my guard is not usable anymore. But—at the present, even I the Lord is unable to completely control the Ruin. If you promise that you will guarantee my life, I will cooperate with you to a certain degree you know?”

“Hou...”

The expression of the devil who heard that distorted inhumanly in joy.

“I do not think you have any other choice. By yourself, you won’t be able to use the true function of the Ruin fully.”

“Very well...”

‘Ku ku’, the devil Dilwy’s shoulders shook with laughter.

“Now, come over here. I’ll listen to the story of this so called Lord without rushing.”

“—Then, excuse my leave, everyone.”

Airi whispered without any emotion as she moved towards Dilwy.

“...wait, a minute, Airi.”

Noct and Tillfur were conscious but could not move as they lied on the floor.

Airi glanced coldly at that as she walked towards Dilwy, and then—,

- Zan-*

A jet black dragon landed down between them in a position that seemed to shield Airi from the devil.

His heart was beating furiously and he could not control his breathing. His body also clearly displayed his fatigue. But Lux was somehow able to move his body.

“.....You are in my way. I have already said I don’t have any use of you anymore.”

Airi coldly criticized as she said with slight frown.

But,

“—I won’t let you go. I have already decided that I won’t let anyone take away those I cherish anymore.”

“Hah”

Dilwy’s eyes shot towards Lux. Looking into his determined eyes, Dilwy laughed and readied his Shot Blade.

Multiple silver flashes pierced Bahamut's fragile barrier.

Not being able to withstand the impact, Lux's upper body cracked with multiple red lines.

"Gu...!"

However, he did not back down as he rushed toward Dilwy before him.

Even as his body was swaying due to physical exhaustion, he slashed down an attack using his great sword with a sharp trajectory. Dilwy casually evaded it and struck Lux's body with his Shot Blade.

Even so, Lux immediately regained his fighting posture and charged forward once more.

However, before Lux's great sword found its mark, Dilwy deflected it with his own sword.

"You still try even though you know it is futile, how unsightly. So the true identity of the Black Hero is only something like this."

Lux unabatedly continued his assault while ignoring Dilwy's scornful words.

In contrast, Airi began to feel pain as she witnessed the scene.

"Stop—please, stop already!"

Airi yelled seeing the heavily wounded Lux showing no sign of stopped fighting even then.

"Why, are you doing something like that!? You, you don't need to fight for my sake anymore, so why—"

"I changed my mind. Although I'm still interested in you, I'll bring you down here. Together with everyone else too."

Dilwy made a quick backhand stroke and flashes of silver flew towards the Triad who were lifting up their upper body.

Lux flew and intercepted the roaring silver flashes.

"-.....!"

Due to the pressure of the impact, Lux's face was covered with thin red lines.

Even through all of that, Lux continued to glare at Dilwy with fearless eyes.

“Lux, kun.....”

“Lux-chi.....”

“.....Lux, san”

The members of Triad were speechless seeing him covering even their tattered self.

Witnessing this scene, Airi had a faintly pained expression on as she held her hands on her chest.

“-.....!?”

“I can’t understand. Are you that stupid? Even though there is no reason to save your sister who already betrayed you, even though there will be no advantage saving those useless small fries in this situation. Ku ha ha ha ha. Is it just like Singlen said? You really don’t have any reason to fight, you try to save someone just because you want to be loved? A pitiful—”

“—Shut up”

“What?”

Lux commanded with a cold, yet threatening tone.

“Don’t you notice anything? Why Airi said those words, why she went as far as lying, pretending to be unrelated to us.”

“-.....!?”

Airi’s cold mask was on the verge of collapse at Lux’s words.

“Airi wants to save us. Even if it gains the resentment of her friends, even if she has to become the villain, even though she cannot use a Drag-Ride, even so she is constantly thinking about what she can do, and fight.”

“.....”

“I remembered..... Whether as the prince of the Old Kingdom, or a criminal of the New Kingdom, the reason I fight has not changed in the slightest since the past.”

In order to protect the people important to him.

No matter how powerful and unyielding the authority(plot) Lux faced, he swore he would accomplish its destruction in his own way.

“Since I failed at that time—I thought that it would be fine if I entrust my dream to someone else.”

Lux thought that his path was to protect Lizsharte, the princess of the new kingdom, and cooperated for the sake of her ideal.

“But, I’m wrong. It won’t be meaningful if my ideal doesn’t come true together with it.”

When an enemy that he couldn’t match was standing in his way, if he had to consider his important people as weak and abandoned them like Singlen—he would rather fight, became stronger, he swore he would protect them.

“I’m—not going to give up anything. I won’t let someone like you, take away even a single one of these girls who are important to me.”

Although blood was dripping from his head and whole body onto his armor, Lux’s willpower didn’t wither in the slightest.

“—Hah! Then I will teach you your helplessness right here! You powerless hero!”

Dilwy sharply flew forward and brandished up his Shot Blade, rushing toward Lux.

He violently drove his EX Wyvern and struck with a terrific slash.

“You can’t protect anyone! Let me show you!”

Dilwy released silver flashes towards Airi.

Lux intended to block the attack, but the number of attacks were too great and several slipped through him—however, “Don’t worry about us, Lux-kun!”

Sharis shouted from behind.

The Triad stood up once more in their Drag-Rides and worked together to make a solid barrier to shield Airi.

“What are you all doing! Don’t move so carelessly! Wearing Drag-Ride in that

condition will make you—”

“It’s all good, Airi-chan.”

Sharis smiled even as blood was dripping from her forehead while the other two also nodded in agreement.

“Even though we look like this, we are not playing around. We cannot just lie down sleeping. It doesn’t matter even if we are powerless in the present situation, we can’t just stand around doing nothing after seeing how you and Lux are fighting.”

“We-ll yeah, we can still move after a fashion…….”

“Yes, we will fight until our last breath.”

“You all…….”

Airi whispered while the three of them were adjusting their formation.

“Thank you—everyone.”

Lux thanked them as he resumed his battle with Dilwy.

With the three’s assistance, the task of protecting Airi was left to them. Lux was gradually pushing on Dilwy.

But—,

“Let me tell you……all of your struggling is futile!”

Dilwy once again soared towards the ceiling while waving his Shot Blade.

“You are definitely finished this time—Silver Flash, Hail Fang!”

“You’re gonna be the one to die yeah, blackened uncle.”

Unnoticed by anyone, Cuelebre rushed to meet EX Wyvern that was going to unleashes storm of slashes from the silver flash once more.

“—You!?”

“I’m thinking that I’m not gonna die here for the sake of our princess. I too ain’t able to bear it see, that I keep getting looked down by sleazebag like you.”

Greifer concentrated all his energy and with a dazzling, shining light cut down with the Tail Blade.

Seeing the spiral curve of the attack, Dilwy was snickered.

“—Battle Array – Vicissitude.”

The moment just before the blade’s tip touched, a forcefield of barrier that was formed with diagonal track repelled the attack of Tail Blade—wasn’t what happened here.

“What-...!?”

“Don’t underestimate someone else too much, uncle. Certainly I’m really reckless, but can learn y’know?”

The blade with multi joint drew an arc with a movement that avoided the barrier and entangled the blade of the Shot Blade.

It was a deluding attack that pretended to aim at the body but actually attacked the opponent’s weapons.

“Your struggling is futile! —How unsightly, you stray dog!”

But, Dilwy who was taken by surprise counterattacked with Howling Howl without delay.

The impact was several times more powerful than the attack output of an average Drag-Ride, and Greifer was blown far backwards.

“.....-!?—Well fine, I’ve made an opening I guess. I’ll leave the rest to you yeah, your highness.”

Cuelebre’s armor was broken while Greifer said with a fearless smile.

To his words, Lux responded with only brief comment.

“—Yeah, I won’t hesitate anymore to fight for my own sake.”

The moment Dilwy turned into offense and exposed a large opening, Lux held aloft his great sword.

“It’s futile—no matter how many times you try, I am much faster than you!”

Dilwy was able to defense faster than Lux could swing down his sword.

He moved with an extraordinary speed and Drag-Ride operation technique that only the current him could achieve.

He unleashed an attack using his Shot Blade to bisect Bahamut with all his strength, however, the forcefield of barrier that was generated from Lux's left to his right completely repelled that attack.

"—Whaaat-!?"

"—Battle Array – Vicissitude"

One of the Drag-Ride operation techniques that the strongest Drag-Knight of Blackend Kingdom, the Blue Tyrant, Singlen Shelbrit used.

Dilwy who couldn't learn that technique until he was turned into devil borrowing the power of Baptism witnessed it with his own eyes.

How can this kid use this technique!?

Just from seeing it only a few times during the Class promotion exam he—.

Even more shudder of terror ran through Dilwy without giving him any time to soak in his shock.

"—Battle Array – Aeon Fire."

".....!?"

The special move that even now Dilwy couldn't use.

By collecting all energy from the barrier, propulsion, and driving force into the Blade, a blow with explosively increased might could be unleashed.

The attack broke through the EX Wyvern's barrier of maximum output and cut down feeply into the shoulder.

"Guh, gahhhh...!"

His blackly dyed shoulder was soaked red from the spilt blood.

Blown to the floor, Dilwy tried to take action to defend from Bahamut's pursuing attack. However, EX Wyvern was slow to react as he tried to take a defensive posture.

".....The machine isn't moving!? Why?! My body is still—"

Although his body was moving, the Drag-Ride was not responding.

Given the impact of Lux's attack attack on the Force Core in his shoulder, he

was unable to move for a few seconds.

“I won’t lose...! After attaining this power! Against a bastard like you, I won’t—”

Dilwy screamed and struggled as Lux moved nearer.

He operated his Drag-Ride with all his available strength to defend against Lux’s sword and slashed back—, Lux didn’t overlook that obvious counterattack.

“—Reload on Fire”

Instantly, countless slashes from the great sword cut through EX Wyvern’s armor.

The wrist armor, Force Core, back wings, and other joints to move the armor were slashed apart by the instantaneous slashes, bursting and scattering the EX Wyvern.

“Impossible...!? Wh, WHYyyYYY-!? I should have taken it back! The power that I should be able to obtain in my hand, and yet—”

Dilwy frantically screamed as his armor fell apart.



He picked up the Shot Blade with his own flesh and blood hand and brandished it, but then that hand along with the sword was cut off.

“—Then, that strength must be just an illusion right? Monster uncle.”

“Gahh.....! GUSHAaAAAAaAaAaAaAAA-!”

The Blade of Cuelebre that Greifer drove flickered and the tip of the blade gouged the heart.

Cracks of light emerged from his body as this monster that was once a man gave his last screams of sorrow.

Similar to an Abyss with its core destructed, that body broke and dissipated into the dust.

Part 13

[So—that handyman brat, he really used my technique, the Battle Array?]

After the fight subsided, one man was moving in the shadow.

It was a strange looking Divine Drag-Ride flying through the passage of Dungeon at high speed—It was Zweigbergk the old knight.

At the surface, he was following Singlen's orders to rescue Lux and others who were left behind in Dungeon but,

[Sir-, but I don't understand. My lord's Battle Array that is making use of tuning is the best technique for a Drag-Knight. No matter how outstanding Lux Arcadia's skill is, it should be impossible to learn it in that short of a time period.....]

The expression of the old knight didn't change. However he sent back a reply with Dragon Voice that was mixed with irritation somewhere. But,

[That's simple. Isn't the answer obvious already, Zwei?]

[By that, you mean?]

Singlen maintained his calm attitude while answering.

[That guy had already known about it. He couldn't use the two Battle Array that I use, but he knew them.]

[.....]

[The use of tuning is impossible if one is not knowledgeable about the control interface of Drag-Ride. But that guy, he must have attempted the finesse of the technique many times since in the past. Even though he did not know the mechanism of tuning, he himself wasn't satisfied with just devising three hidden techniques. Even after that, he constantly thought whether there is something more that he could do, and day after day, on and on, he continued to work hard

groping for new techniques. That's how it is.]

[No way, such thing is.....]

'Hard to believe', Zwei let out such voice.

[He crossed sword with me at the exam. When he saw that my skill is clearly superior, that guy immediately switched his fighting style. He moved not to defeat me, he fought in the way to steal my techniques—that guy always hardened his defence at the tournament in royal capital most likely isn't just for training his foresight, he also aimed to learn the technique of his opponent's attack even just by one more.]

Singlen's exultant tone caused Zwei to become silent.

[In a situation where that guy cannot help but joining Seven Dragon Paladins, he realized my trap while leaping into it in order to save his comrades. Until that point it's according to my expectation, but it's unexpected that he also stole two of my techniques. Even though his face looks like he cannot even kill a bug, but he is scheming like a strategist. He cannot be dealt with normal method, is what this mean.]

[.....]

[I was thinking of him as one of the pawns connected to Fugil, but he is a man more terrifying than I imagined. The time ahead looks amusing.....don't you agree, Zwei?]

Even while in one side Singlen was showing vigilance toward Lux, his tone sounded as though he was amused.

Zwei nodded in agreement to that before he immediately cut off the Dragon Voice's communication.

Part 14

“.....That was a tiresome battle. Good grief.”

“Are you all feeling okay? Greifer, everyone?”

Greifer took a breath, then he saw a new EX Wyvern flying in front of him.

The one who was riding it was a youth with androgynous features, Coral.

“You.....where did you go until now?! Do you know how long we have been looking for you—”

“Sorry. I desperately shook off the many Abysses that appeared here in the Dungeon. If I carelessly brought them over here, I am afraid it would put you all in danger so—”

“Haa, well, doesn’t matter. Although there are lots I wanna say, for now let’s leave this place first.”

The moment Greifer muttered, not far from them, the sound of a something being opened was heard. Yoruka wearing Yato no kami landed down.

“It is great you are alright, my lord. I followed your instructions and secured the escape route.”

As a result, it seemed that she eliminated a large number of Abysses in the area by herself.

The lights in the surrounding also returned to their original color, and the alert state of the Ruin was finally ended.

“Let’s retreat now. We are going to talk later, after we ensure everyone’s safety.”

Greifer agreed with Coral’s suggestion after examining the surroundings.

The Triad also stood up somehow, while Lux who had dispelled his armor was standing in front of Airi.

“.....”

Airi could not lift her face to meet Lux’s eyes.

The matter of the ancient document that she was hiding.

The matter about whether she and Lux were really related by blood with the Ruin or not, which was still unclear at this point.

The matter of how she showered harsh words to Lux and others, even though it was in order to save them.

And above else, the matter of how she got caught into the evil design of Dilwy of the Dragon Marauder, which exposed everyone to danger. All those matters made her unable to lift up her face.

However—

“I’m sorry Airi. You feel pained for my sake.”

Even so, Lux said in his usual tone while sounding somewhat apologetic.

“Airi, I completely understand how you are feeling. It’s all right already, so—”

The words of her big brother that were the same like usual made Airi’s feelings erupted.

“-.....!? Nii-san! Just what are you saying!?”

The tears that she was trying to hold back dripped down, then she knocked her hands on Lux’s chest powerlessly.

“We might be different from what we thought you know!? We might not be a mere criminal of the ruined old empire, we might be people related to Ruin! If that’s really the case, then from here on, it’s unknown what is going to happen to me or Nii-san!”

Airi feared these things all this time.

The possible realities weighed on her so she could not help but shout.

“Even just now too! Why didn’t Nii-san just abandon me?! I don’t want nii-san to suffer because of me anymore! So why—”

“I don’t feel miserable or anything.”

He murmured as he gently held Airi stroking the hair that was the same color as his.

“I have never imagined anything I have done to protect Airi to be painful. There is also nothing that I thought as painful or I regret doing for you. Just being able to protect my only important family makes me happy.”

“...Why”

Airi could not bear it and she buried her face in Lux’s chest with a sob.

“Why is nii-san always like this!? Are you idiot!? Why are you always, for the sake of someone like me—”

“.....I’m sorry that I made you worry. But, I won’t change my mind. No matter what kind of secret is hidden inside us, I will always be Airi’s big brother, that’s why”

Lux gave off a slightly shy smile as he stroked his sister’s back gently.

“It will surely be all right. It’s alright, that’s why—don’t cry anymore.”

“tsu.....U, AAaAAAAAH!”

Airi raised her voice in contrast with Lux’s words.

She wanted to hold back in front of the others, but the tears would not stop.

The family who continued to stay at her side since she was a child, when she had been frail and helpless as she lost her mother.

The big brother who since the period of old empire, had continued to protect herself no matter how much he got hurt.

Even though he was always slow and insensitive, even though when the time came he would forcefully shoulder everything alone.

His voice’s warmth and his chest were warm, the reassurance from his hands stroking her hair, they caused the tears to spill out without end.

Inside the Dungeon, a girl’s sobs echoed.

And then, the incident closed its curtain.

Epilogue – His answer is

Basement in『Labyrinth』which the day after the night, suppression operation ended.

In the presence of the consular officials including Milmiet, Lux officially signed a contract to become one of the『Seven Dragon Paladin』.

It would usually take time to be approved by every country, however, there is no turning back.

But it might cause any trouble in New Kingdom of Atismata if the admission for the『Seven Dragon Paladin』 is refused.

Just as Lux was thinking, Celes called out.

“Well then Lux, please allow me to handle this. You, who refused my recommendation were detained. You decided to give in that strong argument.”

Celes’ expression is unusually happy.

“But I don’t want to trouble Celes-senpai.”

“There is no trouble. As far as the Ralgris house is concerned, you become one of the 『Seven Dragon Paladin』. I will be praised and face proudly in front of my father. That’s why I want to help you. ”

“... Then I will rely on you, senpai.”

When Lux nodded in agreement, Celes was relieved and said, “Yes. However, there is one condition. Each of the 『Seven Dragon Paladin』 must have an aide. Please let me help you in this too. ”

Aide of a『Seven Dragon Paladin』.

Greif had taken Coral, and Singlen brought old knight Zwei He didn’t waver.

If Celes, who was the strongest in the academy and well-known in the history

of all member country and the political affairs of their aristocracy supports him during negotiation, there would be no greater help than her.

Lux agreed and finally settled.

“After the end of inspection and some treatment in infirmary, I decide to go in room where Airi and the Triad gathered.”

“Are you sure you want us here? Isn’t it more convenient to talk among family?”

Just as Lux sat on a bed in the room, Celes asked, but Airi quietly shook her head.

It appears that Celes is thankful in Lux and Airi for risking their lives in this fight.

“Is your body okay? You aren’t hurt, are you?”

“I ask a same question to you nii-san, are you okay?”

“.....”

For Airi who already returned to her usual self, Lux smiled nervously.

At that moment, Airi suddenly sat on Lux’s lap.

“Wa...!?”

Lux didn’t feel much weight in his legs because Airi is much lighter than him.

Being puzzled by this rare behaviour of Airi, Lux froze in the place.

“... Don’t be shy now. I have some complaints towards nii-san.”

“Complaints... on me? What did I do?”

“Because of nii-san, I have terrible memories from yesterday. I’m embarrassed to death from crying in front of all those people. How are you going to repay me?”



While blushing, Airi sat on Lux's lap and stared at him.

"So, sorry. But, that... I—"

"Nii-san is truly selfish. It's aggravating so I gave up on stopping you."

"—Eh?"

"Nii-san, as the 『Seven Dragon Paladin』, please stop that Singlen. Nii-san's goals and plans are largely decided on that. I will also assist you as much as possible, such as deciphering an ancient document, and aiding Her Majesty the Queen."

Drag Knight world rankings.

As Singlen served as vice captain, it is the world-wide rankings showing the capabilities of Drag Knights.

The world rankings of Drag Knights are decided on various achievements such as Abyss subjugation, simulated warfare and strategy carried out at various places.

As a 『Seven Dragon Paladin』 representing the New Kingdom of Atismata to stop Singlen. Fugil needs to be tracked at once.

"...May I?"

"I admit defeat. From the start, I don't have any hostility towards nii-san. I knew, I already became aware of my feelings—"

Being embarrassed, with a glare in her eyes, Airi stared at Lux.

Upon seeing this, Lux responded with a smile.

"Oh, wow. These two are letting us watch something good."

"Forbidden love— Ah, I won't lose—"

"Yes, I support Airi."

"—Ha!? Are you serious!?"

When Triad said it while watching, Lux's face became red with embarrassment.

But, Celes stood face-to-face with Lux and coughing purposely to gain

attention as she straightened her chest.

“Then, can you give me more time? Thanks to you, we have been appraised highly in this campaign and got qualifications to get into upper class——but, I decided to decline the offer this time.”

“Eh...?”

“This is what we three decided after discussion. It is still early for us now, right. Even when I fight as 『Black Hero』, I was trying very hard and you reminded me of my lack of strength and naivety.”

“Such a thing——”

“Of course, I’m aware of the gap between our talent and aptitude. However, I want to try again with you all three from the beginning. Therefore when we hit the wall, will you lend me your power as a friend?”

To Celes’ words, Tillfarr and Noct looked at her with determination.

After hearing those words, Lux showed a warm smile.

“——Yes, if you are ok with me, I’m glad to help.”

To Lux’s reply, the Triad replied with a smile and with Celes’ proposal, Airi also participated in the celebration.

After all, the hidden sake was brought out by Pare, everyone who used to be on good terms with him had now become angry at Professor Raigree.

But now, there are many friends who support Lux and Airi.

This became the happiest and the greatest achievement so far.

From now on as a 『Seven Dragon Paladin』, the pursuit of a new dream finally begin.

In the meantime, Lux cherish his life filled with laughter and warmth, and with a great determination to protect it.

●

○

■

The next afternoon, in the room where Coral's presence is not there, Lux was gathering his luggage to return home. Suddenly, there was a soft knock on the door.

When he got up and opened the door, Krulcifer was standing in front of him.

"Congratulations on your promotion.—and great job. Also this time, it seems a lot of things had happened."

"Thank you. Also, congratulations to Krulcifer-san. —But, what's the matter? We have to leave the city soon and later..."

"....."

Ignoring Lux's question, Krulcifer entered the room.

And quietly sat on the bed where Lux was packing.

".....?"

Lux was slightly confused and sat next to her.

"So a 『Seven Dragon Paladin』. Lux-kun, you've become a big deal. When I first met you, you were just a molester and an underwear thief. "

"No, well... —that was an unfortunate accident wasn't it!? It was a misunderstanding!"

While panicking, Krulcifer smiled and said.

"But you decided, right? You won't hesitate anymore."

"...Un. Actually, I cannot suppress my feelings anymore. "

Five years ago, that day.

Due to Fugil's betrayal, the future which Lux wanted during the revolution ended in failure.

Lux took action because of the atrocities the royal family was committing.

He understood, he could no longer hesitate.

The 『Seven Dragon Paladins』which is not bound to international treaties and using the power to protect those dear to him.

Stop Singlen's tyranny who rules like the Old Empire and find the truth

regarding the incident five years ago.

The criminal living in the New Kingdom... as the prince of the Old Empire, what can he do?

He realized that he needs to find a way to walk towards his desires.

Since you seem to be determined, can I say one thing?

Sitting closely to Lux, Krulcifer whispered.

“Lux-kun. Are you interested in the mystery of the ruins?”

“——Eh?”

Those unexpected words made Lux flinch.

“It is better to say that after returning to the new kingdom, I may return to Ymir once again.”

“Well, maybe——”

In the past, Lux involved in engagement of Krulcifer and was reminded of something.

“Well, it’s where I came from. I had an urgent call from Einfolk family. Obviously, it’s regarding the political marriage to make connections with upper echelons of the New Kingdom. Hence, I do not know what kind of wind is blowing back home.”

She smiled nervously.

Krulcifer always talks indifferently about her family and home, it seems she had complex feelings about them.

Krulcifer who came from ruins, still somewhere which it seems to have a wall between her and her family.

“Could that mean, it is related to ruins...?”

“I think that the possibility is high. There was a big event in the ruins. So, my presence is needed.”

“.....”

Orders were sent to return home immediately due to the changes in Ymir’s

ruin and increasing vigilance.

This is a reasonable decision even if the issue was not related to Krulcifer.

“So, that’s why—— I came to consult with you...”

“——Okay, I will go.”

Just as Krulcifer said that, Lux replied.

“Eh.....?”

With round eyes, Krulcifer stared into Lux’s face.

“Although I am Lisha’s knight, I will go with you, I think she will allow us to go together.”

“Y, yes, thank you...”

Towards Krulcifer who looked relieved, Lux looked curiously.

“...I’m surprised that you agreed immediately. Is it ok?”

With blushed cheeks, she whispered to Lux with a tone only she can hear.

“Eh? Did you say something Krulcifer-san. Ah, What?”

In the moment of confusion, Krulcifer further pressed her body against Lux.

When Lux turned his face, Krulcifer whispered with a subtle expression.

“——I have a favour to ask. If I’m forced to explore the ruins, you will have to find something that connects to the Arcadia Empire.”

Airi had already shared the information about the ancient document to Lux’s close friends, Relie and Lisha.

On top of that, Krulcifer was concerned about his relationship with Lux. His blood line called “key manager” and the haze’s blood line which he called himself “Creator”.

We may know what kind of mystery lies within when it is revealed.

“However, I just want you to promise me that no matter what I do, don’t abandon me and be there for me——”

Krulcifer who was always calm said in a weak tone.

She was afraid that when the mystery in the ruins is revealed, her relationships with the people around might change.

Lux held the girl's hand and smiled gently.

"No matter what happens, Krulcifer-san will always be my friend. I promise."

"—— Thank you."

Shortly after silence filled the room, Krulcifer gently stroked Lux's cheek.

Then, as Lux blushed and diverted his eyes, Krulcifer brought her lips close to Lux's face.

"Ku, Krulcifer——... san?"

"Don't worry. This is the advance payment for coming to country of Ymir——"

While feeling the sweet moments with the girl close to him, a knock came on the door.

".....!?"

"Lux-kun. It's time to say goodbye to everyone in the New Kingdom whom are about to depart——"

When the coarse voice came beyond the door, the two separated in panic.

"Just as we are in our sweet moments, someone came to disturb us."

While blushing, Krulcifer slowly stood up.

While somewhat relieved, Lux had an awkward expression.

Afterword

It has been a long time. This is Akatsuki.

Time flies and already Bahamut too reach the sixth volume. Until now this is the first time I write a series that break six volumes.

This too is simply thanks to all of you honored readers, thank you very much.

Various things happened from fifth volume until this sixth volume comes out, but for my first autograph session since I was born I went to Taiwan (first vacation abroad).

Honestly speaking, I was absurdly nervous, there was unexpected thing, and then it was really fun, this corner is too narrow to talk about them here, so I was thinking that if only I could report the detail in my blog until this book come out.

And then, I have an important announcement.

The anime of Saijaku Muhai no Bahamut is decided!

I was terribly surprised.

It seems that the book I wrote will be given a lot of picture, sound, and voice.

The design of cool mecha and heroines of Kasuga-san who is in charge of illustration, how will they move in TV, I'm really looking forward to it from now.

Honestly I still cannot really believe it, but I'll be happy if everyone can look forward to the follow up report.

And so, for the thanks.

The illustrator Kasuga Ayumu-sama.

Thank you very much for the Lisha-sama in the armor version who decorated the cover page after a long time, and also the new characters that increased a lot. Also for Yoruka's 'huff huff'.

My editor Satou-sama.

Thank you very much for also checking the serial short stories in addition of the usual manuscript.

I think the first stage is completed for the moment.

From now on will be the crucial moment of this series, so please look forward to the next volume too.